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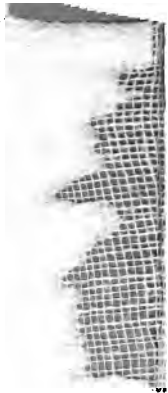
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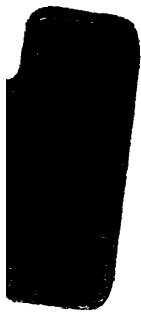
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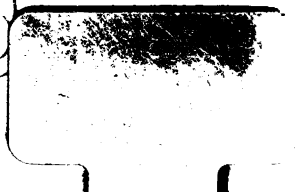
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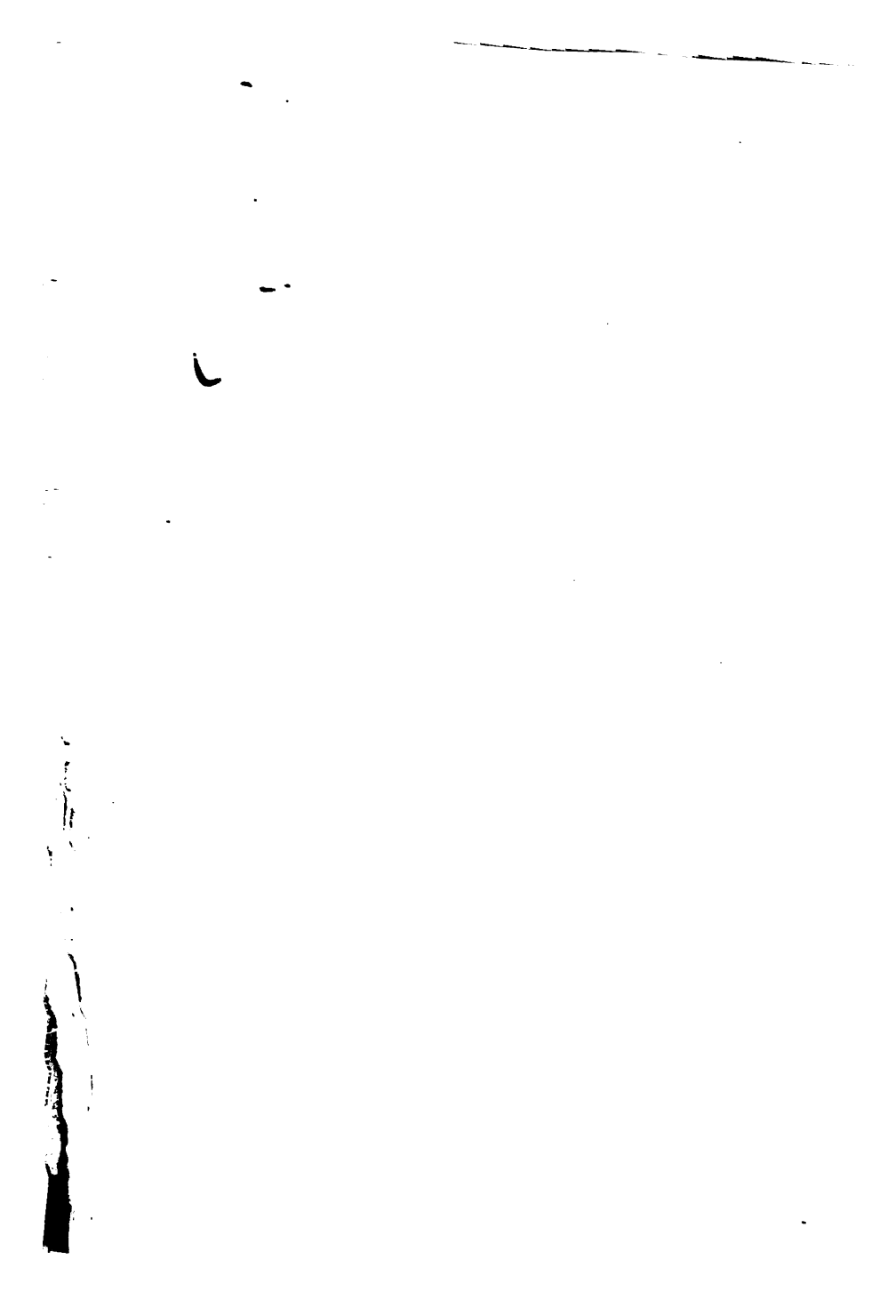
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"Don't I look just like a real country boy, don't I?"

mispiece.

THOSE MIDSUMMER FAIRIES

BY

THEODORA C. ELMSLIE

AUTHOR OF

"THE LITTLE LADY OF LAVENDER."

WITH

NINETEEN ILLUSTRATIONS.

LC
"We'll talk of sunshine and of song,
And summer days when we were young!"
WORDSWORTH.

PHILADELPHIA :
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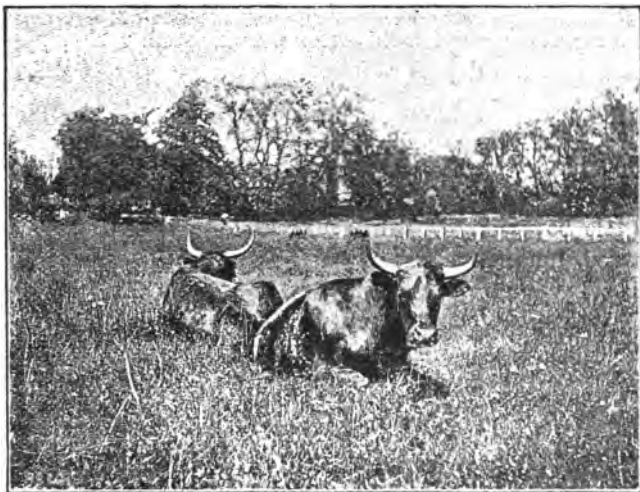
“Don’t I look just like a real country boy, don’t I?”

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IN A SUNNY MEADOW.

THOSE MIDSUMMER FAIRIES.

CHAPTER I.

A SPOILED CHILD.

“So, gazing on him as we gaze
Upon a bud whose promise yet
Lies shut from out the glowing rays
That afterwards illumine it ;
I marvelled what the fruit might be
When that fair plant became a tree.”

—MRS. NORTON.

LITTLE Sir Bernard Bentinck sat on the balcony, amid the flowers, the calceolarias, and the pink and white and red geraniums, and the dainty slender-

stemmed marguerites, his small person comfortably disposed in the depths of a great, luxurious deck-chair, one small hand wielding a big palm-leaf fan, the other clasping a slim, little leg, encased in an irreproachable black silk stocking.

This youthful Baronet was just seven years old, a little boy with the head of one of Raphael's sweet-faced, innocent cherub choir, and beautiful, eloquent, hazel eyes, that seemed to express nothing but gentleness and docility. Soft, dusky curls framed very charmingly his pretty, little face, brown curls just touched with gold, as though a ray of sunshine having fallen on them lingered yet lovingly.

He lay back lazily amid the crimson plush cushions of the cosy deck-chair, a dainty little figure in a smart sailor's suit of white drill, that was further embellished by a pale blue silk collar. He had nothing in all the wide world to do, but flick away the tiresome flies that would buzz around this warm morning, and now and then raise himself slightly to catch a glimpse of some vehicle passing in the street below. He was tired of playing with Tootsie, his mother's fat, little pug dog, and Tootsie had had enough of play too, and had curled herself up into a plump, compact lump at his feet, and had gone to sleep, and was snoring as only fat pug dogs can snore. He was tired, too, of his new story-book, he had looked at all the pictures in it, and had decided that they were tiresome and uninteresting, and that, as the tale they illustrated was very probably equally stupid, he should not take the trouble to read it. So the new book in its smart blue and gold cover lay scorned upon the floor, and made a pillow for Tootsie's little, round, bullet-like head.

And little Sir Bernard had nothing to do, and told himself that he felt very dull, and that it was really a great shame that nothing should present itself for his amusement.

The balcony of this house in Grosvenor Place was shaded by an awning, gaily striped with scarlet and yellow, the railing was painted and gilded, the floor was carpeted, and every available space was filled with choicest flowers. Elegant little baskets of fragrant plants hung overhead, pots of geraniums and calceolarias stood in each corner, and delicate creepers twined themselves about the railings in luxuriant profusion. At one end, stood a large cage full of canaries, that were singing lustily in the bright sunshine. The birds' song and the scent of the flowers seemed to make this spot a tiny oasis of country life, an echo, as it were, of country sights and sounds in the midst of Town.

In the street below, well-mounted equestrians passed on their way to Rotten Row, their horses' hoofs clattering over the freshly-watered road, their horses' bright plated bits and snaffles shining and glinting in the sunlight. And now and then a smart Raleigh car or miniature dog-cart, with high-stepping cob [a short legged horse], well-tooled along by some neat-figured damoiselle of the "tailor-made" style, rattled by. Then there was a good sprinkling of hansoms bound for Victoria Railway Station and whirling by with impatient fares, and some omnibuses, slow, and heavy, and rumbling, with dusty, tired-looking horses and hot, uncomfortable passengers laden with innumerable small parcels. These and occasional fast-spinning tradesmen's carts formed the traffic. Not until later in the day would commence that monotonous stream

of fashionable carriages that regularly rumbled by on their way to the Park.

The day was young yet, and something of the dreamy, delicious freshness of a true June morning lingered in the air, albeit it was London air; and along the street-paths shabby, wan-faced children were hawking golden cowslips and deep, rich brown wallflowers, that seemed to waft a breath of country air upon the breeze. Little Sir Bernard Bentinck sighed. He wished that he could see the places wherein these sweet flowers grew. He wondered if the children who sold them had seen them. He thought not, for they looked very pale and sad. Surely they could know nothing of the freshness of the country.

A white hand brushed back the Oriental silk curtains that hung over the window, and a lady stepped out upon the balcony. She was young, *petite*, and pretty—yes, *very* pretty, with a sort of “fairy” prettiness; and she wore a morning gown of some soft, white stuff that quite carried out the “fairy” look.

“How quiet you have been, *mon cher*,” she said, in a soft and musical voice.

Little Sir Bernard looked up at her with a rather languid smile. “It’s so hot, isn’t it? Dreffly hot. Have you finished your letters, mother?”

“Yes; at last. Ah! I’m thankful to have finished the tiresome things. I hate writing letters. Well, Miss Timms returns to-night, and at least she is useful as a secretary. How have you amused yourself, little one?”

“Oh! I’ve been listening to the birds, and looking at the flowers, and pretending I was in the country. I wish we *were* in the country, right away from hot,

dusty London, all among the daisies and the buttercups! I'm so tired of London!"

"What do you know of the country, Bernie?" Lady Bentinck asked with a light laugh as she sat down in a low basket chair beside her little son. "Simply what story books and pictures tell you, I fancy. You are quite a town-bred child, my dear. You were born in the most fashionable town in Europe—that adorable Paris! and you've lived in towns ever since!"

"Yes, towns, nothing but towns," responded the small Baronet impatiently. "English towns and French towns, and Italian towns, and German, yes, and Spanish towns. Always towns. And that is just why I want to see the country. I've never seen the country, and I know it's sweet and bu'ful and I want to go an' find out all about it for myself. I want to see the flowers and the fields and the birds and the little lambs, and I want to romp in the hayfields and—and—"

"Be bored to extinction. Precisely so," interrupted Lady Bentinck with a *moue* (wry face). "*Mon cher*, you don't know what you are talking about. Listen, Bernie, the country is meant for imbeciles and cabbages, and the town is meant for reasonable human beings. The country means people in ill-cut garments that give one the shivers, mud knee deep, insects innumerable and alarming, mad bulls, impassable stiles, no shops, and a railway station and telegraph office five miles distant. That's the country."

"No, it isn't," unfilially contradicted her youthful son. "It's birds and flowers and lambs and hayfields, and I want to go and see it for myself at once." With which Sir Bernard shook back his dusky curls, threw

down the palm-leaf fan, and sat up on his cushions looking extremely determined.

"What has put this absurd idea into your silly little head?" demanded Lady Bentinck resignedly.

"It was a picture," said the little Baronet, "a picture in the Royal Academy. Don't you remember it, *muvvy*?"

"No, I never remember pictures," replied her Ladyship, yawning. "Give me that fan, Bernie. Thanks. The flies are so tiresome. Well, and what was this wonderful picture that so impressed you, eh?" She looked half-laughing into his earnest little face.

"It was a bu'ful picture. I can see it in my head now," said little Sir Bernard thoughtfully. "There was a hayfield and a lot of children romping in the hay. Country children with rosy faces. They did look so happy and so jolly romping in that nice sweet smelling hay," cried the child eagerly, and with flushing cheeks. "I—I wished I was with them! An' overhead there was a blue sky—ever so blue—an' in the hedges there were flowers, so *real* looking that I felt as if I could almost smell them. Oh it was a bu'ful picture! An' in the little blue book you bought, *muvvy*, the cat—catalogue, ah! that's it, it was called 'In the country,' that was the name, 'In the country,' *muvvy*."

"And the sight of this picture made you want to go and tumble in the hay too, I suppose?" Lady Bentinck asked, with a light, rippling laugh that had a pleasant childlike ring in it.

"Yes, yes," little Sir Bernard assented eagerly. "It did—*awf'ly*. Can we go into the country, *muvvy*? Oh! say yes."

"Can't you think of some less inconvenient amusement?" his mother asked.

"Why is it inconvenient?" demanded the little boy.

"Because this is the height of the London season and my engagement book is filled to the margin, and I have sent out invitations for several large parties and many smaller. Then my dance is fixed for the 18th. Really to leave town at this juncture is an impossibility, Bernard."

"You said," retorted little Sir Bernard, displaying more decision than grammar, "that's there's no such word in the dickshnry as 'impossible' for people that's got money."

"Then I made an exceedingly rash statement," responded Lady Bentinck promptly.

Little Sir Bernard pursed up his pretty baby mouth in a fashion that was anything but pretty, and bestowed a vicious kick upon the dainty plush cushions of the deck-chair.

"I want to go into the country," he cried fretfully, "I want to go!"

"Don't be naughty and tiresome," said his mother sharply. "If you are I shall give no consideration to your wishes. You are too old to behave like a baby."

"But you are so unkind not to let me do as I wish!" exclaimed the little boy. "*Dreffly* unkind! In a moment I shall cry very loud, I shall."

"Then I shall call Adela and she shall put you to bed. You are a very naughty boy, Bernard," retorted Lady Bentinck angrily.

Suddenly the little Baronet burst into a flood of tears.

"I—I feel so tired and hot always now," he sobbed

out plaintively. "Ever since I had those nasty measles I've feel'd like that. I want to sit still all the time and rest and—and—O muvvy, I think I'd feel different in the dear, pretty country. I do so want to see the hayfields and the flowers!"

Lady Bentinck worshiped this child, who was all the world to her, and she now looked at him anxiously. It was, she reflected, quite true that he had been languid, pale, and altogether unlike himself of late. He had been seriously ill with measles in the spring, and a fortnight at Brighton had not brought back the color to his smooth cheeks nor the vigor to his little frame. Since that illness he had displayed no interest in the pleasures and the companions that made part of his luxurious little life, and although not exactly ailing he looked delicate and fragile. He was unusually quiet too, and at times fretful and nervous. Well, perhaps, thought the young mother, country life and country air were what he needed.

She bent forward and kissed him kindly. "Don't cry, Bernie. I can't bear to see you. I'm not unkind, my dear. We must see what can be done."

Spoiled child, though he undoubtedly was, there were yet generous points in the little Baronet's very imperfect character. Now he flung his arms about his pretty young mother's neck, and pressing his soft cheek to hers, cried quickly :

"I was naughty just now, muvvy, an' I'm sorry. I'll try and forget about the country if you like, really I will. I—I don't mind much."

"Dear boy," she said, clasping him to her. "But no, you needn't do that, Bernie. I think perhaps you are right, and that country air would do you good."

Listen, your uncle has placed 'The Chestnuts' at my disposal while he is in Italy, and he won't be back until August. We might go down there soon—next week if you wish it."

"Is 'The Chestnuts' in the country?" little Sir Bernard asked eagerly.

"Yes, quite. It is in a village that rejoices in the hopeful name of Bumbleton. But—you want to leave London very much, Bernie?" She looked at him wistfully, for she could not forget her many friends, and her many engagements, and it did seem rather hard to be spirited away, in the midst of a splendid season, snatched as it were from the sparkling whirlpool of pleasure.

But the little Baronet knew nothing of the beauty of unselfishness, and although he might easily have guessed at her feelings, he answered promptly. "Of course I want to go. I want to go awf'ly—awf'ly."

"Then that decides it," said Lady Bentinck with a little sigh. She, for her part, was not spoken of by her associates as a very unselfish woman, but she found it easy to put herself aside, where her boy's welfare was concerned. Mother love—true mother love—is very beautiful and entire. There is no room for selfishness in it.

"And can't we go to-morrow, muvvy?" suggested the small Baronet persuasively. "I want to go to-morrow. I should like best to go to-day, but I s'pose that can't be?" He looked up at her eagerly. "There wouldn't be time for our things to be packed—eh?"

"Oh, no, indeed, that's quite impossible," said Lady Bentinck very decidedly. "And to-morrow. Well,

to-morrow's dreadfully soon, my dear child. I think we had better say Monday."

"Do let's go to-morrow, muvvy darling, *please*," persisted the little Baronet. "I don't like waiting. When I want a thing, I want it at once. The servants can pack the things and send them after us, you know. You'll come, won't you?"

"Very well," said Lady Bentinck resignedly, after an instant's reflection. "We will say to-morrow then. But I shall have to run up here again for a day or two next week. There's the dance you know, and two dinner parties. I can't recall my invitations."

"That's all right then. That's comfort'ly settled," her small son exclaimed joyfully. "Muvvy we must take Tootsie and the canaries, and my musical box, an'—an' the new rocking horse, because it amuses me on wet days, and lots of other things; and of course Billy must go. I shall want to ride a lot in the country, and Billy will love to canter along the shady lanes."

"You can take what you like," Lady Bentinck said carelessly. "You have only to tell Brace what you wish, and he will see to it."

"And you must write an' tell Miss Shaw, that I won't do any more lessons just now," continued Sir Bernard cheerfully. "I'll not have time for lessons in the country."

"Very well. I will tell Miss Timms to send her a line. But I fear you will soon tire of the country, my little boy! It is really not the fairyland your fancy pictures it."

"When we are tired of it, we'll just come away," he said placidly.

At this moment, a smart little turn-out—brisk bay, and neat Raleigh car—was drawn briskly up to the curb, and an instant later the house bell rang loudly.

"Are you going out, muvvy?" the little Baronet asked, as he got out of his deck-chair and went to the edge of the balcony to look down on the waiting equipage.

"Yes, dearest. I'm going to take Mrs. Scott-Ranelagh for a turn in the Park, and then she is coming in to lunch with me. You did not intend coming, did you, Bernie? I fancied you did not care for driving."

"Oh no, I don't want to come. May I have aansom, and go to a lot of shops. I've heaps of things to buy, things I shall want in the country. May yes, muvvy."

"Very well. But Adela must go with you. Shall I give you some money, dear? How much will you want, I wonder? Well, you had better, perhaps, go to shops where I have accounts, and then you can simply have the things entered to me."

"I won't tell you what I'm going to buy, muvvy. It's a secret."

"Indeed! That's most exciting. And now Bernie, I must run away and dress at once, as Mrs. Scott-Ranelagh will be waiting for me."

Lady Bentinck rose to her feet, and stooping, kissed her little boy lightly on the forehead. "I will send Adela with your hat. Don't get yourself hot and tired, my child."

"May we have lunch at the Army and Navy Stores?"

"Of course, if you wish it. But don't you want to see Mrs. Scott-Ranelagh. She's coming back with me, you know."

"No, I don't," replied little Sir Bernard, with the painful candor of his years. "She wears pink powder on her face, and smells of horrid scent. I don't like her a bit."

"Hush! hush!" cried Lady Bentinck, with a peal of laughter. "Oh, you terrible boy! It will never do for you to speak of ladies like that, sir."

"I shouldn't if they were all pretty and nice like my mother," he assured her sweetly.

"Little flatterer!"

"Oh, here is Brace," exclaimed the small Baronet, running to the window. "Brace! Brace! come here! Such news, Brace! we're going into the country—the dear, sweet country, right away from tiresome old London. We're going to-morrow—to-morrow! Isn't it lovely, Brace?"

"Leaving Town just at the height of the season, Sir Bernard?" questioned the elderly butler, with a glance of deferential surprise at Lady Bentinck. Brace was an old and confidential servant, who had served the little Baronet's grandfather in years gone by. He was a most useful person in the present establishment, being devoted and faithful, and thoroughly reliable; and he knew his value, and allowed himself the privilege of proffering advice to his superiors when he considered that such advice was required. He thought all the world of "the little master," but now and then they would, nevertheless, engage in a hotly-pitched battle, Sir Bernard considering Brace dictatorial, and Brace being of opinion that

Sir Bernard was "a bit too wilful and commandin' for such a young gentleman."

"Sir Bernard is tired of London, Brace," Lady Bentinck said quietly, in reply to his look. "He has a fancy for the country."

"But your many engagements, my Lady?" suggested the old servant. He turned to the little Baronet, "You will come along with Adela and me, Sir Bernard, and leave her ladyship to enjoy her parties, won't you, sir," he said persuasively.

"Leave *mu*vvy behind? I never heard of such a thing!" cried the child stormily. "Horrid old Brace to think of it. I—I *hate* you, there!" and he stamped his small foot angrily.

"Well, sir, I think it would be the best plan, an' so I must say," Brace steadily maintained.

"You are bad and cruel!" shouted the little Baronet. His pretty, childish face was crimson with temper, his eyes flashed fire upon the daring Brace, who stood erect and stolid by the window. "I—I—I will never speak to you again. Nasty, *nasty* man!"

Suddenly his expression changed. He ran to Lady Bentinck, and flung his little arms around her, crying out:

"*Muvvy*—*mu*vvy, darling, you'll come with me?"

"Of course I will, dearest," she responded quickly, and stooped to kiss his flushed face. "Why, I live to please you, my sweet boy!"

"As if he didn't know that," muttered Brace discontentedly, as he turned away. "Well, between 'em all, they'll just spoil little Sir Bernard."

* * * * *

In the evening Miss Timms came back, after a

fortnight's holiday which she had spent with her mother, a very old lady whose home was in some almshouses in a distant suburb. Miss Timms was a little, thin, faded, elderly lady, from whom the sunshine and the snows of many summers and winters seemed to have stolen the color and the vitality. Her appearance was suggestive of the paled daguerreotypes of our ancestors, or of a sketch in washy, neutral tint. Her eyes were mild and weary, and her voice low and deprecating. She had been Lady Bentinck's companion for five years, and little Sir Bernard remembered her from his baby days, and, in his rather selfish fashion, loved her kind, familiar face, which always became transformed by smiles when turned on him.

Lady Bentinck liked her too—this quiet and old-fashioned little companion of hers—although she sometimes said that she really was very dull and stupid, and extremely poor company, and that she couldn't imagine why she kept her. The fact was, that Miss Timms was simply devoted to Lady Bentinck and little Sir Bernard, and they knew that she was, and appreciated her devotion to an extent that she—worthy, humble soul—little suspected.

It was eight o'clock when Miss Timms arrived at the house in Grosvenor Place. Lady Bentinck had just gone out to a dinner-party, and Bernard was sitting on the broad cushioned window-seat of his handsomely-furnished nursery, turning the handle of a big musical box to the pleasing tune of "Little Annie Rooney," while Tootsie stood up on her small hind legs before him and whined a most feeling accompaniment.

When the small, sombre, brown-clad form of Miss Timms presented itself in the doorway the little boy sprang down from his perch in the window, and ran to meet her, with welcoming outstretched arms.

"Oh, Timmy, dear, how glad I am to see you again! And I've such news for you, Timmy—*such* news! We are going right away into the country to-morrow—down to Uncle Arthur's house, 'The Chestnuts.' You'll like that, won't you? Only think of the hay-fields, and the birds, and the flowers. Oh! won't it be lovely?"

"Away into the country, my dear? What! in the very midst of the season?" cried Miss Timms, astonished.

"Yes, 'cos I'm tired of London," airily explained the little Baronet. "And," he added eagerly, "I want to see the country for myself—not in pictures an' books any more, but for myself. Aren't you glad we're going, Timmy, eh?"

"Very glad, my love. Years ago, when I was quite a little girl, my home was in the country. It was a very happy home." She gave a little sigh, but there was a smile on her lips. Memory had touched a pleasant, yet pathetic chord. Ah! why is it that much that is pleasant in the past seems to us, looking back from the present, as pathetic too?

"Muvvy didn't want to go at first, but I very soon 'suaded her," said Bernard, throwing back his curly little head importantly. "And when I'd talked to her, she thought she'd better come. You see I shouldn't care for the country even, without muvvy."

"Your mother is dining with Lady Airle, to-night, my dear, I think Brace told me?"

"Yes, it's a big party. Mother wore a pink frock—sort of fluffy stuff with a French name, an' her lovely pearls. She looked so pretty, just like the picture of the fairy in my new story book. Tell me, 'Timmy,' and the little boy lowered his voice mysteriously: "There are fairies—real fairies, like we read of in the story books, in the country, aren't there?"

"What put such a fancy into your little head, my dear?" Miss Timms asked, gently.

"Is it a fancy?" questioned Bernard, in a disappointed tone. "Ah, I'm sorry for that. I thought—it says so in the story books—that the fairies live in country woods and fields, hiding themselves in the cups of the flowers, and playing with the birds and the little squirrels among the trees. Isn't that true, Timmy? Is it only 'make up'?"

He looked so eagerly up at her, that kind Miss Timms faltered and temporized.

"I don't know, my love," she said, "but when we go into the country you will learn for yourself."

"Perhaps they don't like Town children?" Bernard suggested, rather wistfully. Then, with a change of tone and a merry laugh, he added, "but I shall take them in, Timmy, I shall take them in! I've bought—but wait and see! Sit down here a moment." He pushed the little lady on to the window seat, and rushed away into the inner nursery, which was his sleeping apartment.

Five minutes later, an utterly transformed little figure darted into the room with peals of triumphant laughter, and threw itself upon the astonished Miss Timms.

"Look, Timmy, look! Do you know who I am—do you?"

The little Baronet had attired himself in a light smocked frock, such as country lads in far-away, out-of-the-world English villages still wear, a wide-brimmed straw-hat, suitable to a market gardener, corduroy riding-breeches and rough leather gaiters. In one hand he flourished a hunting-crop, in the other a rake that was twice as tall as himself. This costume certainly presented a striking contrast to the dainty velvet suit, with its girlish collar of deep lace, and soft silk sash, that Bernard had just thrown off. The change appeared to give him the greatest pleasure, and he capered about before the astonished Miss Timms, exclaiming delightedly:

"Don't I look just like a real country boy, don't I? The fairies will never know that I'm a town child, and that I was born in Paris, will they, Timmy? Oh, I shall take them in grand, I shall! What d'you think of me, Timmy, dear?"

"Very nice, my love, very nice," murmured Lady Bentinck's little companion, rather faintly. Sir Bernard, in this new character of a small son of the soil, took away her breath. She wasn't quite sure that she considered this, his latest freak, strictly proper.

"A Baronet aping the costume of a ploughboy!" she murmured, wonderingly.

"I can tumble in the hay in this, and never spoil it," said Bernard, surveying his smock frock with an expression of unlimited satisfaction. "An' I can climb stiles and scramble through hedges like the boys in that country story we read. Isn't it a good plan, Timmy? I thought of it all my own self, an'

Adela an' me went and bought the things this morning. It was awf'ly hard to find a smock frock, but at last we got one at a place where they keep fancy dresses, in Covent Garden. Aren't the gaiters jolly? They're so comfor'ble."

"And what does your mother say to this, my dear?" Miss Timms enquired rather uncertainly.

"Oh, she only laughed, and said I was a funny boy an' must wear funny clothes if I wanted to, 'cos it doesn't *signify* down at Bumbleton. Bumbleton's the little village where Uncle Arthur's house is, you know."

Miss Timms produced from her shabby hand-bag two small parcels, which she handed to the little Baronet. "Some small remembrances, my love, that I got for you in the country."

Bernard bestowed upon her an affectionate hug.

"How kind you are to me, Timmy," he said, "I love you very much, next best in the world to Muvvy. An' after you, I love Tootsie and the canaries, but I don't love Adela at all, 'cos she pulls my hair when she brushes it."

The parcels were found to contain some highly-scented peppermints, adorned with florid mottoes of a strongly sentimental type, and a terrible little bright pink vase painted with impossible flowers and bearing the inscription, "A present from Margate." These offerings little Sir Bernard received with astonishing equanimity, thanking Miss Timms for them so prettily, that the good soul was perfectly satisfied. A latent sense of chivalry, and a real affection for the simple-minded donor, bore him successfully through the ordeal, and the vase was placed in state on the nursery

mantelpiece, while the peppermints were put away "for another day."

"Come and sit in the window, Timmy, dear," Bernard said, taking her hand. "And let's have a nice talk. Oh, go away, Adela. I don't want my supper yet. Go away!"

The smart maidservant set down her tray unheeding of this remonstrance. She was quite accustomed to engaging in pitched battles with her youthful charge, and regarded what she was pleased to describe as his "tantrums" placidly. Bernard was always tiresome with Adela, who fussed and irritated him terribly. He chafed under her espionage and loudly asserted that "boys don't want nurses."

"A very nice supper, Sir Bernard," said Adela. "Stewed pigeon, and oyster patty and trifle—ah! and a soufflé. Come now, Sir Bernard, you like soufflé!"

"No, I don't. I'm tired of it. Go away, Adela, I tell you I'll not have supper yet. I'm talking to Miss Timms an' you *interrupt* me. Go away, I say!"

"I think, my love, if I were you I'd take my supper now," mildly interposed Miss Timms. "If you do not make a good supper you will not be fit for your railway journey to-morrow. Dear me, Bernie, by this time to-morrow evening you will probably be in the country. Just think of that!" She rose from the window seat as she spoke.

"Where are you going, Timmy?" Bernard asked quickly. "Don't go! I want you to stop with me."

"I must go and unpack a few things, my love; but I will come back and bid you 'good-night' if you wish it. You will take your supper now, dear, like a good child, I am sure."

"If I do will you come by-and-by, an' read stories to me till I go to sleep?"

"With pleasure, my dear. You have only to send me word when you are ready for me."

"Thank you, Timmy," said Bernard politely. "I'm awf'ly glad you've come back—*awf'ly*. No one can read stories as nice as you can. Don't forget to bring the Hans Andersen book, Timmy, will you? I want to hear some more of 'What the Moon Saw'."

"Your supper's getting cold, Sir Bernard."

"I don't care if it is, Adela. It isn't anythin' to do with *you*, if it is, you cross person. Lift Tootsie on to this chair to sit aside me, an' help eat all these nasty foods."

"O Sir Bernard! When there are so many poor little children starving in the streets, and you a despising of patty and trifle!" cried Adela reproachfully.

"Be quiet, nasty cross-patch person. Don't take any notice of her, Tootsie dear, we don't love her, do we? an' so we'll just pretend she's not here, or—or we'll pretend that she's a cabbage, Tootsie, just an—a—a fat green cabbage, you know."

"Sir Bernard! you forgets yourself, sir." And Adela flounced indignantly from the room.

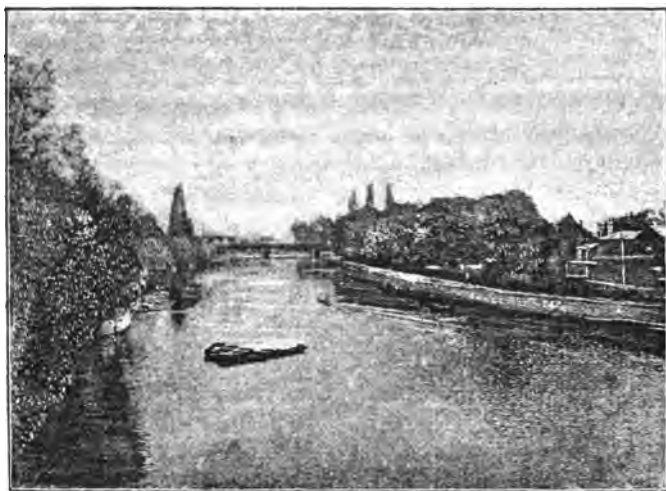
"That's nice, isn't it, Tootsie? We're awf'ly glad she's gone, aren't we," said Bernard happily. "Now, you shall have the pigeon an' I'll have the soufflé. Sit up nice, please, an' I'll tie this napkin round your neck, so's you won't spoil your new collar. I think I shall buy you a feeder, Tootsie, with 'Don't be greedy' writed on it, for I'm sure you need that warnin'—you're the greediest little dog I ever knew."

This little lecture was quite lost upon the namesake

of Ally Sloper's lively daughter, for she was wholly engrossed in the discussion of stewed pigeon, which she gulped down in anything but a ladylike manner. Certainly, as little Sir Bernard frequently said, Tootsie was dreadfully greedy.

"But then she is only a dog, you see, an' don't know better," he would add very gravely. He was fond of this little fat pug dog, which was his only intimate playfellow. It was true that he had many small, smart acquaintances whom he met at juvenile parties and entertainments, and whom he rivalled in dainty costumes to the pride and delight of Lady Bentinck and the aspiring Adela, but these could scarcely be counted friends and playfellows. The companionship of children of his own age was indeed what he greatly needed. To be happy he must needs learn to give and take, to exercise unselfishness and self-control, and sometimes to give way to the wishes of others. An only child, the heir to a fine property and great wealth, his mother's all, it was little wonder that he was spoiled and over indulged. But under a crust of wilful selfishness lay dormant a sweet and generous nature that only needed to be awakened.

Little Sir Bernard Bentinck, whose pretty, infantine face constantly reminded those who saw him of the lovely heads of Raphael's cherub choir, had his good points, although he was undoubtedly—a spoiled child.



NEAR BUMBLETON.

CHAPTER II.

BERNARD'S FIRST DAY IN THE COUNTRY.

" the grace
 The golden smile of June,
 With bloom and sun in every place
 And all the world in tune.

" Cool airs blow o'er me
 And mavis sing
 Butterflies frolic
 With fluttering wing.

* * * * *

" Milk-white anemones
 Hide in the grass
 Sprays of wild hedge roses
 Bend as I pass."

It was quite late on the following day when Lady Bentinck and her little son, accompanied by Miss

Timms, Adela, and numerous attendants, alighted at the tiny country station of Bumbleton. The soft, hazy twilight of June lay upon the breezy commons and the verdant fields, and down in the valley the little out-of-the-world, old-fashioned hamlet of Bumbleton nestled sleepily, with faintly twinkling lights that were put to shame by the great white stars shining serenely in the sapphire heavens above.

Little Sir Bernard Bentinck was too tired and too sleepy to feel much interest in his new surroundings; and as soon as Brace had lifted him into the big, roomy barouche, that awaited them in the station yard, he fell asleep, with his curly brown head on Miss Timms' shoulder. He remembered little or nothing after that, until he awoke on the following morning, with the pretty golden sunshine streaming into his room, and the birds singing gaily outside.

"You have had a beautiful sleep, Sir Bernard," said Adela.

The little boy sat up in bed, with an eager look on his face.

"Pull up the blind—pull it right up," he cried. "I want to see the country, the real country, that I've thought so much about."

Adela laughed as she obeyed this somewhat imperious command. "Dear me, Sir Bernard! Why, you might be expecting to find yourself in fairyland. Well, to my mind, this country of yours isn't nothing, compared with London. I haven't no sort o' fancy for cows and coocumbers; and it seems to me that there ain't much else to contemplate." And she disdainfully sniffed her disapproval.

But her little charge heeded her not. He was

gazing with eager eyes at the pretty, old-fashioned garden, with its prim rows of flowers, such as our grandfathers and grandmothers loved; its quaintly-cut yew hedges, smooth green lawn and shady beech trees. Beyond this was a field, in which grazed half-a-dozen Alderney cows; and beyond that again, sparkled the sunlit waters of a miniature lake. And over all was the sunshine, the glorious, golden sunshine of dawning summer, when the world is yet young and fresh with dew, before the burden and the heat of meridian.

The town-bred child clapped his hands delightedly.

"Oh, it is beautiful!" he cried. "It's even beautifuller than I thought. Adela, I s'pect that heaven is somethin' like the country, don't you?"

"Gracious me, Sir Bernard! what queer things you do say!" exclaimed Adela, her orthodox mind somewhat shocked. "Well, get up now, if you please, sir, or you'll be late for breakfast."

Bernard was delighted when he ran downstairs, half-an-hour later, to find that his mother had given orders that breakfast should be served in the verandah that skirted the back of the house, and into which the French windows of the ground-floor rooms opened. This verandah, covered as it was with creeping roses of many scents and shades, was a charming spot; and the daintily arranged breakfast, the easy, basket-worked chairs, and the cut flowers that decorated the snowy cloth, looked tempting enough.

"Well, and what do you think of the country, Bernie? Does it come up to your expectations?" laughingly asked Lady Bentinck, as she sat down to breakfast with her little boy and Miss Timms.

"It's *perfeck*!" said Bernard, solemnly. "I know

I shall love it. Do you think you'll love it too, muvvy?"

"For a few days, yes. For longer——"

Lady Bentinck shrugged her slight shoulders expressively.

"Where are the hayfields, muvvy?" asked Bernard eagerly. "I haven't seen them yet—an' I want to awf'ly. Where are they?"

"We must find out. Ah! Those are splendid strawberries, Brace. Look, Bernie; aren't they gigantic?"

"They are much bigger than town strawberries, muvvy, aren't they?" he said, triumphantly. "Well, I *knew* that country things are best, an' that's why I made you come," he added, with great complacency.

Lady Bentinck laughed, and shook her pretty head at him. "Your latest whim, *mon cher*! How long it will last, time—immediate futurity—will prove!"

Bernard, heaping his plate with strawberries and cream, scarcely heard what she said.

"Tootsie would like some strawberries," he remarked. "Brace give Tootsie some strawberries."

But Tootsie was chasing a dainty blue butterfly over the smooth grass of the lawn, and wouldn't come when she was called; so Bernard remarked that he thought he would eat her share of strawberries as well as his own.

When breakfast was over, Lady Bentinck said she should go for a drive, before the heat of the day; and Brace went down to the stables to order a carriage round at once.

"And you will come, too, Bernie?" suggested Lady Bentinck. "You will like to see the pretty country."

The little Baronet shook his curly head. "Driving is too town-like. I shall stay here and play in the garden an' the field; an' I shall go for a row. Brace says there are two boats on the lake. I shall teach myself to row. It will be great fun."

"You are not to go near the lake!" exclaimed his mother, apprehensively. "At least not until the afternoon, when Miss Timms or I will be with you. It is most dangerous for children to play with boats—and I won't have it."

"Oh, do let me, muvvy! I'll be ever so careful, really and truly I will."

"No, Bernie, I mean what I say. I'll not have you endanger your life. Adela will be busy unpacking your things, and you can play on the lawn. But don't go into the field—for, often, cows are most dangerous," added Lady Bentinck, who had all a true Londoner's terror of cattle, and who regarded a mild-eyed, sleepy Alderney cow in the light of a slightly modified wild beast.

"If a cow came after me, I should shoot it with my bow and arrow," said Bernard grandly.

Lord Northbrook's country house, "The Chestnuts," so called because of a belt of handsome chestnut trees that edged the fields, wherein the afore-mentioned Alderneys grazed, stood in the very heart of the little country town of Bumbleton. But both house and grounds were surrounded by a great, high, brick wall, that secured to them complete privacy, and above which only the chimney-stacks and the tops of the trees could be seen by curious passers-by. The front and main entrance was in the wall, and opening on to one of the narrow village streets. It communi-

cated with the house by a long passage, at the end of which was another door leading into the quaintly-panelled corridors of the ground floor. Thus the house itself stood some yards back from the road, and once within those gaunt, red brick walls one left all thought of town and street behind, and enjoyed the delicious seclusion of the country, the pleasant quiet of which was unbroken by sound of wheels, or of the hurrying footsteps of passers-by.

"The Chestnuts" was an old-fashioned place, with a certain old-world air about it that seemed delightful to a little town-bred boy, accustomed to modern fashions. Parts of the house were centuries old, and the child was charmed with the funny devices worked on the ancient tapestry that covered the walls of some of the bedrooms, with the quaint chimney-corners in the huge fireplace in the diningroom, and with the family portraits of daintily-costumed little lads and lassies, his ancestors of many years ago, that hung in the oak-panelled corridors and on the dimly-lighted stairs.

Bernard went to the door with his mother and Miss Timms, and saw them start off in Lord Northbrook's pretty phaeton, with its pair of frisky Arab ponies. It was a very smart equipage, and the little boy admired it exceedingly.

"I think Uncle Arthur has very good taste," he said, in his funny "grown-up" way.

"It's a pity he's not here to listen to that compliment," exclaimed Lady Bentinck laughingly, as she took the reins from the groom.

When the ponies had trotted briskly away, Bernard went upstairs and put on his "country clothes," the smocked frock, the leather gaiters and the market-

gardener's wide-brimmed straw hat, of which he thought so much. Adela, who was unpacking and sorting his extensive wardrobe, watched these proceedings with much amusement, but made no remark. She considered this "dressing-up" a very harmless game, and was glad to see her small charge so safely employed. When Bernard had dressed himself in this fantastic costume, he took his hunting crop and the rake that was twice as tall as himself, and went away saying he was going to play in the garden.

Presently Adela, looking out from the open window, saw him seated on the grass, apparently occupied in making a daisy chain. He looked, as she afterwards said, "So quiet and so good," that she felt he might be left to his own devices for a little while, so she departed to her early luncheon in the servants' hall with an easy mind.

Bernard, looking in his picturesque country dress like some dainty little figure from one of Kate Greenaway's pretty picture books, sat on the smooth green turf beneath a spreading tree of copper beech, and threaded the little pink-tipped daises with careful fingers. When he had made a chain long enough, he secured it round Tootsie's fat neck, and then he began to look about him for some fresh amusement.

Suddenly he remembered that he had read, in the fairy tales he loved, that fairies hide themselves in the bells and cups of the country flowers, sleeping there through the hot, sunny, summer days, and only awakening when mortals are asleep and moonbeams flood the fields and lawns. Well, now he would find out for himself whether this statement were true.

There were plenty of deeply-cupped flowers in that well-stocked old-fashioned garden, convolvulus and fox-glove and Canterbury bells, and many others of the same sort, that must make the softest and most fragrant beds for dainty fairy forms to slumber in. Bernard looked at them eagerly, these mysterious flowers that might hide so much that was wonderful.

"I will step very quietly," he said to himself, "for fear I wake the fairies, an' they fly away before I've seen them," and he trod the soft grass paths between the flower beds on tip-toe and with bated breath.

He went thus from blossom to blossom, peeping into the lovely heart of each with eager, searching eyes, but there was no fairy to be seen. His little face fell. He was greatly disappointed. Suddenly from the depths of a crimson fox-glove out something flew, something soft and velvety and buzzing. Bernard sprang back with a little cry of delight. But no, this was no fairy sprite, only a happy, old humblebee dipping for honey, and startled by the curious small mortal who had thus interrupted his feast.

"The fairies don't like me," said the little boy sadly. "I s'pect they know I'm a 'Town child, an' in the book it said that they didn't like Town children. They flyed away when they heard me comin,' I know. I thought I heard a little rustling like wings make, but I s'posed it was the leaves o' the trees. They keep singin' to themselves those leaves do, or p'raps they're talking. I wonder what they talk about?" And he gazed up with thoughtful, innocent eyes at the filagree of green against the blue sky in the far-away tree-tops.

"I think I'll go and make friends with the cows,"

he presently said to himself, "as the fairies are so unkind."

He was not an obedient little boy, and he paid so little attention to what he was told, that perhaps he did not remember that Lady Bentinck had particularly begged him not to go near "those dangerous Alderneys." However, that might or might not be, he got over the railing into the field and went up to one of the pretty tawny cows, which was very quiet and tame, and patted its sleek neck and plucked handfuls of grass, which it chewed serenely. All would have gone well had not the little boy suddenly taken into his silly small head the wild idea that it would be great fun to ride a cow. Why should not a cow carry him quite as well as a horse? he argued. No sooner had he framed this question in his mind, than he proceeded to secure a practical solution of it. Mild-eyed, sleepy "Clover" felt two little eager hands seize her curly mane, and then, to her surprise, and not to her delight, an impertinent little boy, whom she had hitherto regarded indifferently as a harmless atom, sprang on to her back and cried out gleefully "gee up." This was adding insult to injury, and Clover felt that a cow imbued with a proper sense of self-respect could stand no more. Besides, what would her staring and astonished companions of the field think of her? So down went Clover's head and out flew her heels, and up and away spun a very frightened little boy, who, turning a clean somersault in the air, landed in a bed of gaudy scarlet geraniums on the garden side of the railing.

Bernard was not without pluck, and though he looked rather white and shaky when he plumped down

amidst the geraniums he did not cry nor make a fuss, but pulled himself up and brushed the earth from his clothes as best he could.

"I've squashed those geraniums, rather," he said, looking at them regretfully. "Poor things! I'm sorry. But I couldn't help it. It was all your fault, you cross thing!" and he turned reproachful eyes upon Clover, who having freed herself of her incumbrance, was cropping the grass peacefully, and flicking off the flies with her long tail.

He was not a bit hurt, only rather shaken, and in a few moments he had completely recovered his equilibrium. He decided that he would try no more equestrian tricks with the cows, however. He had no desire to repeat his rapid journey through the air and precipitous descent upon the geraniums. He remembered the boats on the lake, and decided that he would go and try his hand at rowing without a moment's delay.

It must be owned that he had not forgotten his mother's commands about the lake and the boats, but then, as has already been seen, Bernard was not an obedient little boy. He was a spoiled child, who always took his own way when it pleased him to do so, and he knew full well that, whatever he did, he would not be punished.

So he ran across the lawn and through the shrubbery to the lake on swift little feet, and without an instant's hesitation. It would amuse him to get into one of the boats, and so he would do it. This was all his argument, and perhaps no voice of conscience whispered "What did your mother say?" But this may be doubted, for conscience is wont to make her-

self heard very distinctly, even in the most careless hearts.

The lake looked very pretty, its clear smooth waters sparkling in the sunshine; the leafy trees and the deep blue sky flecked with tiny cloudlets reflected on its calm and glass-like surface. A pair of handsome swans glided away from the landing steps as Bernard ran up, but the little boy scarcely noticed their pure, white, graceful beauty, so occupied was he in looking for the boats of which Brace had spoken.

Ah! there they were, moored up close to the steps, two prettily-painted light boats, a four-oar and a canoe.

Bernard had never seen a canoe before. He thought it the daintiest and most tempting bark possible.

"It's just the size for me," he cried delightedly. "I'll get in at once."

He sprang lightly off the steps into the middle of the canoe. The delicately balanced craft floundered under him, shot out to its rope's length and turned clean over. The little boy was precipitated into the clear, deep waters of the lake. There was a great splash and a frightened scream, then—silence.

* * * * *

If William, the boat keeper, had not remembered that some of the boats' cushions wanted some slight repairs, which his wife's clever fingers could manage, and if he had not come back when he did to fetch the said cushions up to his cottage, little Sir Bernard Bentinck's life story must have come to an abrupt termination. But it so happened that William appeared on the landing steps at precisely the right moment, and his strong arms quickly rescued the terrified child from what might have been a watery grave. He was

in the water without a second's delay, striking out sharply for the struggling white-faced little figure, and a moment later, both he and Bernard were in safety on the landing steps.

But Bernard had had a terrible fright and was fairly unnerved. He could only sob faintly and cling to William's coat, begging him to hold him fast, and, when the honest boatman tried to assure him that all danger was passed, he scarcely seemed to understand what was said to him. Wet and dripping, with a white, terrified face, and shivering nervously, he looked a deplorable little figure enough. William, carrying him in his arms, strode rapidly across the lawn and through the verandah, into the house. He met Adela in the corridors, who screamed when she beheld her youthful charge's condition.

"I'm drowned, I think, Adela," wailed poor little Sir Bernard, who felt very, very sorry for himself.

"Not a bit o' it, sir," William reassured him. "You've only got a duckin'. Take him upstairs and get him into bed and give him a hot drink," he added authoritatively, to the frightened maid. "Come, look sharp. The little gentleman will be none the worse if you have your wits about you, but he mustn't stop in these soaking clothes."

Adela resented his tone but carried out his instructions, and by the time Lady Bentinck returned from her morning drive Bernard was warmly tucked up in bed, while several frightened maidservants anxiously plied him with hot lemonade, and other homely brews.

Adela's hysterical explanations were scarcely explicit, but Lady Bentinck hardly listened to them. Seeing Bernard in bed and flushed and excited, she

immediately concluded that he must be very ill, and a man was dispatched forthwith to fetch the doctor.

"You had better run all the way," said the poor young mother, tremulously, "and mind you tell him to come at once. I shall know no peace till he is here," she added, turning to Miss Timms with tearful eyes.

"I will not see the horrid doctor," cried Bernard, plunging about on his pillows. "I'm not ill and I want to get up. Go away, Adela, I don't wish to have that nasty Eau de Cologne on my forehead, and I will not have all these blankets on me. I'm *roasted*. Oh, you are all cruel and hateful!" and he burst into a flood of angry tears.

Certainly Lady Bentinck and Miss Timms and the solicitous women servants fussed about the poor little Baronet in what must have seemed to him a very trying manner. Their intentions were of the best, but they did not understand boys, and as Bernard complained he might have been "a baby or a silly girl."

"You bother me so," he said ungratefully. "Why can't you leave me alone? I'm not drowned."

* * * * *

"Doctor Allan, if you please, my lady. Walk in, sir, please."

A very small, thin man, of perhaps thirty, dressed in a light suit, and a shabby brown velvet coat, with a low turned-down collar and a red silk handkerchief came quickly into the room. His face, pale and attenuated, was as clean shaven as a boy's, and his hair, long, brown and thick, was brushed straight back from a massive brow. His eyes, which were slightly

prominent and of a pale grey color, were quick and intelligent. He looked like an artist or a German musician, but not in the least like a doctor.

"Not much wrong here, I hope," he said, in a quiet and pleasant voice, as Lady Bentinck gave him her hand, and then he turned to his little patient.

"How d'you do, doctor?" said Bernard, politely. "I'm not ill. I'm only very hot 'cos of these blankets, an' the boiling lemonade, you know. May I get up, please?"

But Lady Bentinck hastily interposed, and very soon the little Baronet saw that he was not to regain his freedom so easily. Indeed he was forthwith condemned to bed for the remainder of the day, the doctor further remarking that it would perhaps be advisable for him not to get up until he saw him again on the following morning.

"As you tell me that he is a delicate child and has only just recovered from a severe attack of measles we shall do wisely to be careful with him," he said. "And if he is kept warm to-day, I trust a chill will be warded off."

Bernard's eyes filled with tears. Brushing them hastily away, for he didn't want the doctor to think him babyish, he said :

"And this is my very first day in the country, an' I did so want to go and tumble in the hayfields like those children in the picture."

"There's no hay yet, the long grass won't be cut for another week," replied Dr. Allan kindly, "so you'll not miss much of the fun. And you must feel thankful for the escape you have had, my little friend," he added gravely, "you ran terrible risk of drowning."

Lady Bentinck shuddered at his words, and drew her boy closer to her and kissed him.

"Thank God, you are spared to me, my own," she whispered tremulously.

"You must give that good clever man who pulled me out some money," said Bernard returning her caresses.

"I must indeed. I will see to it at once. Ah! you are going, doctor."

"Yes, I think I am no more needed here to-day, and I have a long round to get through in a few short hours. Good morning, Sir Bernard. I hope I shall be able to set you free to enjoy the country to-morrow. Yours will be but a short imprisonment, I trust!"

When he had gone away, Bernard became very fretful and cross.

"It's really too bad!" he said to Miss Timms. "This is my first day in the country—the lovely country that I've always longed to see! An' now I must spend it in bed. I hate to be kept in bed, an' all these horrid blankets and this hot lemonade make me feel so hot. An' my head aches. An'—an'—oh, Timmy, I think I'm the unhappiest little boy in all the world, I do!"

"It is only for to-day, my love. A necessary precaution," murmured Lady Bentinck's little companion soothingly. "To-morrow, dear Bernard, you will, I trust, be about again."

No one reproached the little Baronet for the wilful act of disobedience that had led to all these unpleasant consequences, and when he narrated his adventure with Clover, the Alderney cow, Lady Bentinck seemed

to forget that she had forbidden him to go near the Alderneys, and only clasped her hands, and said that he had certainly passed through hair-breadth escapes. So Bernard felt that he had played the part of a hero rather than a culprit; in fact, it never occurred to him that he had been in the wrong.

Presently Lady Bentinck went out into the little town, and bought up all the picture books, puzzles and bonbons that the limited small shops in the straggling village high street could produce. So much did she purchase, that the servants' entrance to "The Chestnuts" was, shortly after her expedition, fairly besieged with errand boys, heavily laden with brown paper packages of all shapes and sizes.

Bernard found an hour's amusement in opening and examining these various parcels, but he soon tired of their contents, and said that the Bumbleton chocolate creams were stale, and that he did not think he had ever seen such stupid books and puzzles as these.

"Take them all away, Adela. I don't want to see any of them any more. It bothers me to have them lying all about—stupid things. Take them *now*," he cried impatiently.

"Shall I read to you for a little while, my love?" mildly suggested Miss Timms.

"If you like," he responded ungraciously, and threw himself back on his pillows with a discontented sigh.

But the story selected was not interesting, or, at all events, Bernard did not find it interesting, and the freshness of the summer's morning giving place to a sultry noon, the heat became oppressive, and closed windows and many blankets a trial. The little pa-

tient tossed from side to side restlessly, and refused to be amused, though Lady Bentinck, Miss Timms and the self-accusing Adela combined in effort to entertain him. It was a long and wearisome afternoon, nor was the evening more agreeable, for Bernard developed a bad, feverish cold that threw his mother into an agony of anxiety, and caused her to dispatch a hasty note entreating Dr. Allan to come at once.

The doctor complied, and his presence was kindly and reassuring, but Bernard felt very unwell, and truly sorry for himself. His head ached and his throat was sore. Every bone in his body felt bruised and painful. He was suffering from a severe chill, the effect of his dip in the lake, and when at length he fell asleep that night, his last conscious thought was that he was a sadly ill-used and most unfortunate little boy, and that Dr. Allan wrote prescriptions for the very nastiest medicine he had ever tasted.

So ended the little Baronet's first day in the country. He was in the very midst of the rustic scenes that he had longed for, and yet unable to enjoy them. And the curious part of it all was that he never attributed this disappointment to his own wilfulness. No one blamed him, and he did not blame himself. Spoiled children are never happy, and Sir Bernard Bentinck was no exception to a general rule.



Mrs. Post at her cottage door.



BLUEBELL WAS AT THE DOOR.

CHAPTER III.

JEANIE AND EFFIE AND THEIR "CHUM."

"Ah! what would the world be to us
If the children were no more?
We should dread the desert behind us
Worse than the dark before."

—HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

DOCTOR ALLAN lived in a little, red-brick, suburban-looking, detached villa at the end of a row of cottages and artisans' dwellings of the modern type, on the outskirts of the tiny, sleepy, country town of Bumbleton. It was not a pretty villa by any means. It was divided from the road by a railing which had two gates, a large one and a small one, that were painted green, and by a narrow strip of garden and a miniature gravel path. There was a small, painted porch

over the principal entrance, and the rooms on the ground floor had bay windows. Behind the house was a long piece of ground enclosed by a high and hideous black fence. This the doctor's children proudly spoke of as "the garden," and they had planted a great many flowers in it, and tended them each day with the greatest care. There were vegetables in "the garden" too, peas, and cauliflowers, and lettuces, and small spring onions and radishes, all things in season. And at the further end was a long line, from which fluttered sundry snowy-white garments, washing "done at home." There was also a pigeon-house and some rabbit-hutches, for in this enchanted piece of ground Jeanie and Effie Allan thought there must be room for everything, and they certainly made the most of a very limited space. In their opinion there was not and never had been such a dear little place as Rose Villa, and to them it was such a happy home as contented and well brought-up children alone can know.

Jeanie and Effie were the doctor's twin daughters, and they had not long since celebrated the occasion of their tenth birthday by a simply organized yet delightful picnic, that they would always look back upon as a most charming expedition. They were alike, yet unlike. Alike in brown, curling hair, and slight, active, long-legged little figures, and fresh, glad, young voices. Unlike in face, coloring, and last, but not least, disposition. Effie was rather pale, and had beautiful, thoughtful, iris eyes, with sweeping black lashes, and a gentle, pensive look. Jeanie was of a more robust type, with the pretty rosy cheeks of a true Scotch lassie, and a sparkling,

merry, saucy little face that was full of fun and mischief and vitality.

The little sisters were devoted to each other, and to their father, the gentle, dreamy student and philanthropist, who, greatly occupied as he was by his books and his patients—poor patients for the most part—gave to his children a more than father's care, and endeavored to fill the place left vacant by the pretty young Scotch girl who had been the cherished wife of his youth. Effie and Jeanie scarcely remembered "Mother," whom "the angels had taken" when they were too little to know the greatness of their loss, but often on Sunday evenings, when papa got a quiet hour with them, and they all three sat under the one tree—a small copper beech—in the garden at the back of the house, and had "a nice talk," he would tell them of her, and show them the faded miniature in a little old gold locket that he always carried in his waistcoat pocket, and the soft curl of glossy brown—just like Jeanie's curls—that was fastened in under glass at the back. And so they did not forget her nor think of her as some unfamiliar dream figure that was scarcely real. And, though she was far away, "right above the deep blue sky," as Effie said, looking up with wondering, thoughtful eyes at the clear and sunny summer heavens, they often spoke of her, tenderly and naturally, as one speaks of those beloved who are distant from us here on earth, and in the children's little hearts her memory was kept ever green.

In speaking of Effie and Jeanie, their constant companion and playfellow must on no account be forgotten. "Chum" was a popular and important per-

son in the doctor's little household. He was a handsome white-and-tan—more tan than white—fox-terrier, with a sharp pointed nose, wistful black eyes, and a very short tail. His chief characteristics were, faithful affection for Effie and Jeanie, of which the doctor was allowed a minor share, a keen interest in rats, and a strong aversion to strangers, especially strangers of the masculine sex. He was a well-bred and most gentlemanly person, and Effie and Jeanie thought him perfect in every respect. He was so companionable and intelligent, so sweet-tempered, playful and gentle, that it was no wonder that they were fond of him. He was always with them, and they never went anywhere nor did anything without "Chum."

There were other pets at Rose Villa; two very inane white rabbits with pink eyes, that ate lettuces and bran from rosy morn to dewy eve, and lived in a hutch at the end of the garden, quite a score of fluttering, tumbling, long-winged pigeons flying in and out of their rickety, picturesque house, and a raven of evil propensities and an inconvenient fancy for silver tea-spoons. Then there was "Jacko," a very knowing green parrot, the greatest chatterbox you could imagine. He lived in an old cage in the doctor's study, and the cage door being left open, promanaded the house at his own sweet will, making remarks of extraordinary astuteness, and non-plussing strangers by his shrill-toned exclamations which struck the unaccustomed ear as queerly human, even weirdly so. He had a habit of hoarsely uttering the monosyllable "Ow!" during any pause in the conversation or immediately after the delivery of some remark, in such a comical, caustic tone that one felt

immediately convinced of his more than birdlike intelligence. The doctor had bought him from a French sailor for a few shillings, when, in years gone by, he had been a ship's surgeon, and had since then refused considerable sums for him. No idea of parting from Jacko could be entertained; like Chum, he was part and parcel of the household.

Annette, a strong, capable young woman, who had been the twins' nurse when they were babies, was cook, housekeeper, and general factotum at Rose Villa. She cooked the dinner, and mended the clothes, and kept all things in working order, assisted by a humble little maid whom the children called Pollie. And a third domestic, a rustic youth, known in the kitchen as "Harthur," took care of the doctor's horses, Bluebell and Firefly, and the children's donkey, "Blinkers," and worked in the garden, filling up his leisure moments by a minute and painful study of an extremely squeaky, cheap concertina, with occasional vocal accompaniments of a harrowing nature. He was, or thought he was, of a musical turn of mind, and, totally oblivious of the appalling absence of harmony conspicuous in his performances, pursued his way in blissful unconsciousness.

This was the doctor's *ménage*, and at least it was a peaceful and happy one. The children knew no cares, and were not troubled by the fact that their frocks were shabby and their country-made boots patched. Nor did they find fault with the simple breakfast and suppers of bread and milk, or oatmeal porridge, which little Sir Bernard Bentinck would have scorned. They knew that papa was not rich, and that he could only help his poorer brethren by denying him-

self, but that did not appear to their simple understandings a cause for discontent.

"I think we're the happiest children in all the world!" Effie said one day.

"Yes, an' so do I," heartily acquiesced Jeanie; while Chum wagged his tail as much as to say, "I agree with you."

These humble little people of Dr. Allan's knew more brightness and joy than did Sir Bernard Ben-tinck with all his wealth and luxury. They had found the true secret of happiness. Do you know what that is? It is to strive to make others happy.

* * * * *

It was a delicious June morning about eight o'clock, and Dr. Allan, with a little girl hanging on either arm, and with his hands thrust deep into the capacious pockets of his shabby brown velveteen coat, was strolling round "the garden," admiring some recent reforms and arrangements devised by Effie and Jeanie, while Chum trotted at their heels with an air of proud proprietorship.

"We've 'cided to call the upper path—by the rain-waterbutt, you know, papa—the terrace," said Effie. "And the piece of grass where the rose trees grow is to be the lawn, an' this part is the shubbery 'cos of the flowerin' currant bushes. D'you think that's nice, papa dear?"

"Most aspiring; and is the waterbutt to be known henceforth as the lake?"

"A *leetle* too small, I think," objected Jeanie gravely. "But it might be spoken of as the fish-pond p'r'aps. Then, when Annette hangs the wash-

ing out to dry, we say she's hoisting the flag. Isn't that a good idea, papa?"

"Capital, capital," assented the little doctor absently, and his mild and pre-occupied gaze showed the children that his mind was far away, puzzling out one of those "cases," which were never long out of his thoughts.

"Breakfast, if you please, Miss Effie," called Annette, appearing at the garden door, the sleeves of her fresh cotton gown rolled high above her elbows.

"There's a s'prise for your breakfast, papa!" exclaimed Jeanie as they went towards the house. "A very nice s'prise."

"Hush, hush, Jeanie! you mustn't tell," cried her sister anxiously.

"A surprise? Dear me! delightful," murmured the little doctor, allowing himself to be led into the dining room by two eager hands.

Breakfast at Rose Villa was a very simple affair. Bowls of oatmeal porridge or bread and milk for the little girls, coffee and bacon for their father, and in the winter a piece of hot, crisp toast, which they took turns in making for him. But modest though the morning meal was, the cloth was spotlessly clean, and the china quaint old-fashioned blue and white, while a jar of fragrant, delicious flowers, freshly gathered from the garden, stood in the centre of the table.

"The s'prise" to which Jeanie and Effie alluded so joyfully was a beautiful brown egg, freshly laid by Specky, the children's favorite hen. Specky was their "very own," and great was their delight when they could supply papa with a nice fresh egg for his breakfast.

"Specky's eggs are so superior," Jeanie said. "They aren't to be compared with the other fowls', are they, papa?" And of course papa agreed.

"May we drive out with you this morning, papa dear?" Effie asked, as they sat at breakfast, the doctor between his two little daughters, and Chum running round, and begging coaxingly for "samples," with which he was liberally supplied.

"Yes, my dear. I've told Arthur to have Bluebell round by nine sharp. I shan't be in till quite two o'clock, so you had better put some cake in your pockets. I've a long round, and must take Graffham on my way back."

The children clapped their hands at this. Graffham was a pretty little village, nestling in the shadow of the wooded South Downs, a charming spot in the June sunshine, a spot that was fragrant with hay and gorgeous with wild pink and white hedge-roses. Jeanie and Effie were always delighted when their father's cases took him that way. They loved Graffham and the simple cottage folk, who gave them such a warm welcome and who never failed to fill the back of the dog-cart with flowers.

So soon as breakfast was over, they ran off, attended by Chum, to feed the poultry and the rabbits, and the whirling, eager, long-winged pigeons, and then Jacko's wants had to be supplied, while, perched on the top of his cage in the sunshine, he shrieked "Rule Britannia," at the top of his hoarse parrot-like voice. Chum did not like Jacko, who sometimes rudely tweaked his tail when opportunity afforded. So he sat just outside the French window of the doctor's study, and sleepily watched Grip the raven,

which hopped up and down the gravel path, blinking at him with little bright, wicked eyes.

When all "the pets" had been properly tended, and Dr. Allan did not allow his children to neglect the dumb creatures kept for their amusement, Jeanie and Effie ran upstairs to their big, uncarpeted, picture-hung room, and fetched their hats. Gloves they never wore, excepting on Sundays, and parasols were regarded by them with strong aversion. What do freckles signify when one is ten years old, and possessed of strong, bright eyes, unaffected even by June sunshine?

As they scampered through the little entrance hall, Arthur, the rosy-cheeked countryman who served as groom and gardener, drove the doctor's trap up to the small green-painted gate. Jeanie and Effie raced into the dining room to fetch a lump of sugar for the pretty bay mare "Bluebell," and Chum, who had a weakness for sweet things, followed them jealously. The doctor came out of his study, pulling on his driving gloves, and with an old book under his arm. Jacko, the talkative green parrot, cried shrilly, "Oh, what a surprise! Ow! Ow! Ow!" and Grip hopped round to the front of the house to see what was going forward.

"Come along, children," cried the doctor, as he took the reins from Arthur; and having presented Bluebell with her moving *bon bouche*, into the dog-cart they tumbled, two rosy-cheeked, merry little maidens, in short holland blouses and big white linen hats.

"A button-hole for you, papa!" and Jeanie fastened a lovely crimson rosebud into his coat. "Isn't

it nice and sweet smelling? Where are we going first, papa dear?"

"To see my little patient at "The Chestnuts."

"The little Baronet boy?"

"Yes, Sir Bernard Bentinck. He is much better, and this charming summer weather should soon set him up entirely. Here we are. You can hold the reins, Effie, and if Bluebell fidgets take her gently up and down; she never stands very quietly in the town."

The doctor rang the house-bell of "The Chestnuts" and was quickly admitted. Jeanie and Effie looked curiously at the high red-brick wall before mentioned, which entirely shut the property off from the road.

"I wonder what it's like on the other side," Jeanie said.

"It looks like a convent wall, doesn't it?" exclaimed her sister. "I can quite fancy that there are a lot of poor nuns shut up in there, can't you? But papa says it's a very pretty place. Well, it's not pretty outside any way."

"I should like to see the little Baronet boy," Jeanie remarked thoughtfully. "I've never seen a real live baronet, only the statue of one. You know, Effie, that stone figure of Sir Ralph de Montmorency, on the big tomb in church."

"Oh, yes, but Sir Bernard wouldn't be like him. He's only a little boy, just the same as any everyday little boy," explained Effie, who was older in a great many ways than her more thoughtless twin sister.

"Very grand, though, I suppose," said the imaginative Jeanie. "Dressed in velvet an' silk an' point

lace. It must be nice to be rich and great. I wish I was a baronet."

"I don't," cried Effie, quickly. "I'd much rather be just Effie Allan, living with papa, an' you, an' Chum an' everybody. I'm quite happy. 'Sides, girls can't be baronets," she added wisely.

"That's a shame," asserted Jeanie. "I don't see why they shouldn't, same as boys. I'm sure they're much nicer than boys."

Here Chum, tired of sitting waiting on the doorstep, jumped into the dog-cart and curled himself up at the children's feet, and Bluebell, startled by the sudden spring, grew so fidgety and nervous that Effie walked her gently up and down and gave her entire attention to her till the doctor came out.

A lady came to the door with the doctor. They were talking earnestly together. She looked very young and pretty, and wore a lovely dress that seemed to reflect the soft azure blue of the summer sky.

"She is like a fairy," whispered Effie to her sister.

"No," said Jeanie. "She reminds me most of a lovely blue butterfly."

"Are these your little girls, Doctor Allan?" asked the pretty lady, with a kind glance at the children.

"Yes," said Dr. Allan. "These are my small people," and he looked at the bright, pretty faces under the wide-brimmed sun-hats with loving pride, as he spoke. "Two Scotch lassies, Lady Bentinck, Jeanie and Effie."

"What pretty names!" she exclaimed, and then added: "You must let them come and play with my little boy, Doctor Allan. Bernard longs for companions of his own age, and I feel that such society is

what he greatly needs. An only child, he has lived all his little life with grown people, and that's not good for him, I'm sure."

"I think you are right," the little doctor said, as he got into his dog-cart and took the reins from Effie. "The constant companionship of elders is likely to put old heads on to young shoulders, and that's never a desirable result. Your little boy is quite well now, Lady Bentinck. Keep him out in the air as much as possible. There's no tonic like fresh air."

Bluebell had waited long enough and she tossed up her graceful head and bounded forward before the doctor could say another word. Lady Bentinck laughed and waved her hand to the children, and they in return waved back to her. The dog-cart bowled round the sharp corner of the village street, and "The Chestnuts," with its gaunt red walls and the pretty lady standing in the open doorway, with a flood of June sunlight enveloping her blue-clad, slender figure, was out of sight.

"How lovely she is!" said Jeanie, enthusiastically. "Just like a blue butterfly."

"Little Sir Bernard must love his mother, dearly!" cried Effie. "Isn't she pretty, papa? Don't you a'mire her awf'ly?"

"She is very pretty, my dear," the doctor responded, with a little sigh. He was thinking of one fairer still, whom his children had never learned to call "mother."

"An' so little Sir Bernard is quite well now?" asked Jeanie.

"Quite well, but somewhat depressed. He's a

nervous, highly-strung little fellow, and his illness has pulled him down considerably. He is too much with grown people, too, and misses the play and fun of children who have companions of their own age. We must ask him to tea, I think," added the kindly doctor. "You would like to see him, eh? A romp with you would do him all the good in the world."

"Let us ask him to-morrow," at once suggested the impulsive Jeanie.

"Wait until Saturday. A half holiday will be best," said Effie.

"Saturday then. I'll send Lady Bentinck a note. Sir Bernard is a funny boy, full of old-fashioned, odd notions. He is very unhappy now because he expected to find fairies in the country, and he says he has not seen one yet and that he is sure they don't like him because they run away and hide when he goes in search of them. He says that to-morrow is Midsummer day and that the fairies always hold a revel among the flowers just in the freshness of the morning before mortals are about, and his intention is to steal down at sunrise into the garden and catch them at play. His little mind is simply crammed with quaint old fairy lore, in which he believes firmly!"

"Funny boy!" cried Jeanie laughing. "As if the fairies would ever let him see them! Why, they're far too sharp to be caught, aren't they, papa? And in *our* fairy book it says that the fairy ball is held at midnight when the moonbeams fall on the grass, you know."

"The little elves ring the blue-bells, when all is ready," said Effie. "I used to try to keep awake so that I might hear them ringin' in the night. But I

couldn't. My eyelids *would* close long, long before the time."

"I should hope so indeed," returned the doctor laughing. "Lying awake till midnight! What an idea for a little girl. And I will tell you something, Effie mine. You are far more likely to hear those fairy bells sleeping than waking. That's a fact."

"Dear me! that's very funny," cried both little sisters in a breath.

"Fairies are funny things," said the doctor with a knowing twinkle in his eyes.

They were driving through Cowdray Park, where the pretty, meek-eyed deer lie in the shadow of the handsome old chestnut trees, and the rabbits scutter away over the smooth green lawns at the sound of horses' hoofs. It was indeed a lovely morning, with azure skies and sun-kissed breezes, the sort of morning that makes one think wonderingly how beautiful, how very beautiful is this world we live in, and with what a thousand lovelinesses of nature we are surrounded.

Now and then Effie or Jeanie jumped down to open a gate or to gather some tempting wild flowers or ferns, and presently when they were out of the Park, Effie took the reins and the doctor pulled out his old book and became entirely engrossed in its contents. The children chatted merrily together and found plenty to amuse and interest them in the country scenes they were passing through.

Bluebell was going at her best speed, and they soon passed the tiny creeper-covered church of Selham and found themselves on the high road to Graffham, a very picturesque road, winding between copses of pine and

of larch and with occasional glimpses of distant country, dimly bathed in a haze of blue heat mist.

By-and-by the delicate church spire and the straw-thatched, irregular cottages of Graffham village came in sight. Rosy-cheeked children ran out to stare wonderingly at the doctor's trap, and old women bobbed respectful curtsies as it passed.

"Pull up at Mrs. Poat's, Effie," said her father, pushing his book into the voluminous pocket of his velvet coat. "I've brought her a packet of tea and I want just to enquire for her rheumatism. Hullo! there are the small boys."

Two little urchins in scarlet caps ran eagerly to the garden gate at sight of the carriage. They doffed their caps in a funny way to the "quality" and the younger one called shrilly:

"Granny, granny! Here be doctor, an' the little ladies coom to see we."

"How do you do, Charley and Harry," said Effie. "Is your granny better?"

Mrs. Poat came out to answer for herself, and her fine old face brightened up with pleasure as she shook hands with "the little ladies."

"Surely it does one good but to see you, Miss Jeanie an' Miss Effie," she said. "An' the boys they do naught but talk of ye. 'Tis always 'Granny, when be the little ladies a'coomin'? Will they coom soon d'ye think?' They are good boys an' more comfort nor trouble, an' Charlie he gets on fine with his learnin'. Schoolmaster's main pleased wi' him."

Charlie grew very red and began to suck his thumb, but Harry, who had a bright, funny, old-fashioned little face, looked up and laughed.

"And are you good at school too, Harry?" asked Effie.

"Oh he's always good, is Harry," said Mrs. Poat. "He's more like a girl than a boy about the house, is Harry. You will step in little ladies and take a bit o' a rest, I'm hoping."

"You can stay here while I go to Mrs. Prescott's, there is a lad there who will hold Bluebell," said Dr. Allan. "Ah! I'm forgetting your packet of tea, Mrs. Poat. Here it is. And how is the rheumatism?"

"Your stuff did it a mint o' good, thank ye, sir. It were better the minute I rubbed it in, an' so I said to Harry."

"That's right. And this summer weather will do more good for you than anything I could give you. I shall be back for you in half an hour, little girls."

He took the reins from Effie, and the children jumped down from the dog-cart, nothing loath, and followed Mrs. Poat up the cobbled garden path and into her low-ceilinged, old-fashioned living room. There was plenty to be seen at Mrs. Poat's, and the doctor's little girls were ever ready to pay her a visit. They sat on the bench in the corner of the great open chimney by the wood fire, and looked at the pieces of bacon and ham hanging up for "smoke cure," and listened to their hostess' latest village gossip. And then they went into the orchard and gave Toby, Mrs. Poats' shaggy old donkey, the biscuits they had brought in their pockets for him. Toby was delighted to see them and whinnied his pleasure when they opened the orchard gate. His coat was like a great shaggy mat, and he presented a very different appearance to "Blinkers," the children's well-groomed donkey at

home, but Jeanie and Effie thought nothing of this, and in their opinion Toby was a charming creature. Chum thought differently, and growled his disapproval, and when Harry tried to pat him he snarled so unamiably at the small boy, that Jeanie thought it best to pick him up and carry him, a performance which she accomplished with some difficulty, Chum being nearly as big as herself.

After this, Mrs. Poat took the little ladies to see her pigs. Jeanie and Effie did not find these creatures fascinating, but they tried to manifest an interest in them and said politely that they were "very nice." It was decidedly a relief when Mrs. Poat grew tired of expatiating on the charms of her fat and grunting pets, and called the children's attention to the wallflowers and fragrant stocks that bordered her garden path.

"Flowers are nicer than pigs," Jeanie whispered feelingly to her sister as they retreated from the sty.

"Hush, the pigs will hear you an' you'll hurt their feelings, poor things," said Effie reproachfully.

Jeanie ventured to express a doubt as to whether pigs were possessed with feelings.

"Of course they are," returned Effie severely, "everything feels. Papa says so."

"Do flowers feel?"

"I don't know."

"'Cos if they do feel, they can't like being picked, you see."

"We'll ask papa." This was the conclusion of most of the children's small arguments.

"Please Mrs. Poat, we should like Harry an' Charlie to sing to us," said Effie.

"Surely yes, missy, if you please. An' what shall un sing?"

"Anything they like. It's sure to be pretty," returned Effie, who had a nice way of speaking that was apt to win all hearts to her.

The little boys looked gratified. They pulled off their scarlet caps and opened their mouths wide and began to sing, their eyes well turned up, their chubby faces somewhat pink from bashfulness. Their song was called "The ship that never came home." It had a pretty, catchy air, and albeit the small voices were somewhat shrill and vibrating, Jeanie and Effie thought it a delightful performance.

"You are very clever, Charley an' Harry," said Effie, "an' when papa comes, I will ask him to give you some pennies."

"The boys are to be put into the church choir soon," said Mrs. Poat with happy pride.

"Ah! I don't wonder," exclaimed Effie in her most "grown up" way.

"Here is papa," cried Jeanie. "He has not been long."

They shook hands with Mrs. Poat, and the little boys pulled off their scarlet caps and made grand bows. Then, as the doctor was beckoning to them they ran out and climbed into the dog-cart, Chum, who had escaped from Jeanie's arms, scampering after them.

Bluebell started forward down the lane, and the children stood up to wave a last "good-bye" to Mrs. Poat and her small grandsons, who stood at the garden gate. The little red-capped boys were beaming with delight, for the kind doctor had filled their chubby hands with sugarplums and halfpence. It was

small wonder that Doctor Allan was beloved by the cottagers of Graffham. He never visited them empty-handed, and his pockets were always filled with coppers and sweets for the children. He was not a rich man; indeed, many people would have considered him poor, but he gave freely of what he had and often enriched and cheered his poorer brethren by little gifts that were the outcome of much quiet self-denial. Jeanie and Effie knew this, and loved papa for it. Such deeds were, in their silent, telling way, worth a dozen lectures on unselfishness. It is the practice, and not the precept, that affects childish minds, and their still pliant characters are formed rather by what they see acted, than by the correct platitudes they hear spoken.

"What a contented old soul!" said Doctor Allan. "You admire Mrs. Poat's content—eh, children? Content with so little! It's really wonderful how happy some of these poor folk are."

"I shouldn't feel content if I had to live in a little poky cottage, with hardly any money to buy clothes and food with," said Jeanie decidedly.

"Content depends on neither palaces nor huts," said her father. "It is not made by luxury nor poverty, nor by any outward thing. It is a rich gift from heaven, one of the best enjoyed by man. And, like many another invaluable gift, it can't be bought."

He spoke rather to himself than to the children, but Effie asked softly, "To be content, people must be good—eh, papa?"

"They must *try* to be good," he answered.

"I try *generally*," Jeanie remarked. "But," she added frankly, "it's easier to be naughty."

" Ah! that's it, my little girl. The broad road is easier than the narrow way. But it's wonderful, Jeanie, how pleasant the narrow way becomes to those who persevere, and if we 'follow in his steps.' "

Jeanie looked up at him earnestly. " I wish I was as good as you, papa dear," she said.

The doctor stooped and kissed her pretty, eager face, " I'm only trying, my little one, as you and Effie are. There is a pattern set before us, the pattern of a holy, sinless life to which we must look. But this you know."

After that they were silent for a few moments, and then they stopped before a little cottage, and the doctor got down and went in to see a poor sick woman. Jeanie and Effie sat in the dog-cart, and talked to a tiny fat boy who was swinging on the gate. He was so little that he could scarcely speak plainly, but his baby heart was won by the sweet, friendly faces beneath the shady linen hats, and he told the children that his name was Willie, and that he lived "at home," with " Muvver an' the baby an' pussy, wot was all soft an' furry."

Jeanie was so delighted with him, that she gave him a penny, which was all her modest purse contained.

" What will you do with it?" she asked.

" Willie 'll give un to muvver."

" Oh, the dear, unselfish little fellow!" cried Jeanie, rapturously. " Isn't he sweet, Effie?"

" You are a good boy to be kind to your mother," said Effie.

" Willie allus dood boy," lisped the little one.

The children laughed at this complacent statement,

but Willie still swung on the rickety wooden gate with a laughing, happy little face, and was quite unmoved by the amusement he afforded.

The cottage door opened, and the doctor came out looking very grave. He laid his hand kindly on Willie's curly head as he passed him, and then got into the dog-cart, and taking the reins from Effie, turning Bluebell's head in the homeward direction.

"Is Willie's mother very ill?" Jeanie asked in an awe-struck voice, as the dog-cart bowled down the sunny lane with its fragrant flower-decked hedges.

"Willie's mother? Willie?" questioned Dr. Allan, with a preoccupied look. "Ah! I remember, the little boy at the gate. Yes, my dear. She is very ill. I don't think she will live through the day. I have done what I could for her, but that was little enough."

"Oh! who will take care of poor little Willie if she dies?" cried Effie, greatly concerned.

"The Good Shepherd who carries the lambs in his arms will not forget this little one, my child."

"Papa, may we pray God to make Willie's mother better?"

"Certainly, my dear little Effie. We will all pray that the poor woman may be spared to care for her little children."

Dr. Allan pulled up Bluebell as he spoke before a small and low-roofed tenement, that was more like a shed than a cottage. Here he had a patient, a little crippled girl, who must lie in bed through summer sunshine and winter frost, and who would never walk or run again in this world. A lad ran out to hold Bluebell, and Jeanie and Effie got down from the dog-cart and followed their father across the narrow strip

of garden. Little Susie was one of their pet *prot'gées* and they frequently visited her. She was a little, bright, cheerful thing, who never complained, and was always good and patient. A cage hung from the wall by her bedside, in which lived a canary that the doctor's little girls had given her. The canary sang beautifully and was the joy and pride of Susie's heart.

"How do you do, Susie?" said Effie, taking the small thin hand that lay upon the patched coverlet.

"Nicely, thank you, miss. I've had but little pain of late," was the cheerful reply.

"That's right," said Dr. Allan kindly. "I'm glad to have such a good account of you, little one. My children have brought you some books to read, and some more wool to knit into mufflers, so you will have plenty to occupy you for the next few days."

"Thank you kindly, sir," cried Susie with a bright look, while her mother added, "she's always busy, is my little girl. She's but just finished two wool scarfs as she sold to the Rectory ladies for a charity bazaar. Her fingers is never idle."

Effie patted the sick child's hand kindly. "Dear Susie, how good you are!" she said softly.

Susie smiled up at her. "You're all so good to me, miss, an' I'm that happy."

"I think Susie's just *wonderful*," remarked Jeanie as the doctor and his children drove homewards through Cowdray Park, Effie driving, and the doctor deeply engrossed in his old book, a musty, moth-eaten volume, that did not look interesting.

"An' so do I," agreed her sister, "so patient and so happy. How glad I am—aren't you, Jeanie?—that you an' me are well and strong, an' can run about and

play. It would be dreadful to lie in bed day after day like poor little Susie."

"*Dreadful!*" cried Jeanie with a shudder. "O Effie, I don't think us is contented enough, do you?"

"I generally feel contented I think, Jeanie, *generally.*"

"Yes, you're gooder than me. But I mean to turn over a new leaf. I shall begin at once. You'll be surprised to see how nice and am'able I shall be."

When Bluebell stopped before Rose Villa, Annette came running out to the gate, to tell the doctor that a man had been to fetch him to a sick person at Woolbeding, and had begged that he would go over there directly he came in from his morning round.

"You must get out then, little people," said Dr. Allan looking at his watch. "At two o'clock you have to be with Miss Brady, and it is twenty minutes to two already."

"Won't you have some dinner before you go on, papa?" suggested Effie.

"No, my dear. Business first." And the doctor drove away without a murmur, Bluebell showing her resentment of this lengthened morning exercise by a fine flourish of heels, after indulging in which she toned down into a peaceful trot.

Dinner was on the table, and Effie and Jeanie partook of their boiled mutton and rice pudding in considerable haste, Chum sitting between them, and carefully claiming his share of the repast.

"You've not got any too much time, missy," remarked Annette, looking in at the door.

"Oh what a surprise! Ow! Ow! Ow!" shrieked the green parrot from his cage.

"Be quiet, Jacko. I'm not going to give you any more potato," said Jeanie. "Yes, Annette, we're just off."

Effie ran to fetch the two brown canvas satchels filled with lesson books that hung in the hall, and a few moments later, two little holland-clad figures emerged from the green-painted garden gate of Rose Villa, and walked quickly up the street past the modern cottages, and the artisans' ugly red-brick villas.

"I think people ought not to do lessons in the summer time," remarked Jeanie feelingly, as she and her sister tramped along in the dust with a powerful noonday sun overhead. "They're a bother. Well, we shall be grown up soon, that's one comfort, for then we shall have no more horrid spellin', an' grammar, an' g'ography. When I'm grown up I shall never open a book. I hate books."

"It will be a long time before you an' me grow up," said Effie thoughtfully. "Years an' years. An' I don't want to be grown up. I'd rather be a child even with lessons to learn."

"Oh, but you learn easier than me. It's not so hard for you."

"I don't learn easy. I only take trouble, a good deal of trouble, with my lessons," replied Effie humbly.

"An' I don't like to take trouble," said Jeanie frankly, "that's the truth. It is so tiresome to bother over lessons," she added in an impatient tone.

"Papa says that children must learn."

"P'r'aps so, but it's horrid all the same. An' Miss Brady is kind, but she—she fidgets. Oh, you know she does, Effie!"

"She is so weak you see, Jeanie, an'—an' sometimes—well, you—you are not very nice to her."

Jeanie laughed. "She doesn't like me. You're her favorite. But I don't care. Here we are, Effie. Good-bye to the sunshine, and the pretty flowers, and the fresh air! Now we've got to be prisoners in a hot schoolroom for a long, long afternoon."

Jeanie was in one of her tiresome moods, and it was useless to argue with her. She bounced into the hall with a cross pout on her lips, and Effie followed her with a little sigh. Poor Effie suffered somewhat from the moods of her more impulsive sister, but she was a patient little thing, and she suffered without remonstrance. She was truly fond of Jeanie, and to do Jeanie justice, she returned her twin's affection—loving, gentle, self-denying Effie—in her own impulsive, erratic way. They were all the world to each other, were this little pair, a world in which papa had his share of tenderness and trust.

Miss Brady, the elderly lady to whom the education of the doctor's children was entrusted, occupied a simply-furnished sitting room, with a bedroom adjoining, over the little stationer's shop that was the pride of Bumbleton High Street. Miss Brady had something wrong with her back. She could not even stand; and the only motion she knew was being lifted from bed to couch, and back from couch to bed again. She had a small—a *very* small income—which sufficed for her few and simple wants; but, not content with this, she did her best to get pupils, for the purpose of devoting her earnings to the poor. She was a clever and well-read woman, whose energetic and never-failing spirit was utterly uncurbed by an almost helpless

body, and doing nothing meant no rest to her. Hers was a busy mind, and she must work or die. Then, too, she longed to do all she could to help her poorer brethren.

Dr. Allan soon learnt all this, when called in to attend her; and, after some reflection, he decided that his little girls should come daily to her, for the instruction that she was perfectly competent to impart. She was a clever woman, and could teach them well; and as for the children, it would do them no harm to exercise the thoughtfulness and gentleness that would be called into play by the enfeebled bodily condition of their earnest teacher.

Miss Brady had now taught Jeanie and Effie for rather more than four years, and she was, naturally, greatly interested in her young pupils. She was kind to them, and took infinite pains with them. But, although they respected her, they did not love her as they might have loved one who could understand them better. Miss Brady had some firmly-rooted ideas about children, ideas that were rather trying. She considered that "little ladies" should find sufficient recreation in making book-markers of perforated card, and in sewing at coarse cotton pinafores, for the Bumbleton babies and the little black children of Christian missions. She also had a theory that, "little girls were meant to be seen and not heard," and another, equally objectionable to the youthful mind, to the effect that children must not speak until spoken to. These ideas and theories she practiced on Jeanie and Effie to her heart's content; and so the three hours that they daily spent in Miss Brady's severely simple sitting room, with old-fashioned, uncomfortable

back-boards fixed to their shrinking shoulders, and Miss Brady's keen grey eyes noting their every movement—were not altogether pleasant hours; and when five o'clock struck, Jeanie would jump up from her books with an alacrity that was scarcely flattering to her teacher, and would dance away into the sunshine with the shortest possible good-bye.

Poor Miss Brady! She loved these children, in her own way, although she did not understand them in the least. Their presence seemed to brighten her quiet room with a brightness inexpressible; and, had they been taken from her, she must have missed them sorely. Effie was her favorite, and it was little wonder that this was so, for the child was always gentle, thoughtful, and persevering; while the more impetuous Jeanie, often gave way to wild and wilful moods, which Miss Brady classed, generally, as "naughtiness."

"Effie," Jeanie said suddenly one day, in a moment of strict confidence—"Effie, I don't think I love Miss Brady."

"O Jeanie!" cried Effie, looking shocked. "Why, we've known Miss Brady so long, ever since we were quite little. An' she's—she's so clever an' good."

"She's *too* good," returned the irrepressible Jeanie, determinedly. "An' I don't see why one need like a person 'cos you've known them a long time," she concluded—with a fine disregard for grammar.

"It seems unkind not to," remarked her sister, dubiously.

Jeanie was less tender-hearted. She shook back her curls and repeated, stolidly, "I don't love her."

"I do," said loyal little Effie.

“Well, p'raps so. You an' me's different. I *might* like her, if it wasn't for the perf'rated card book-markers an' the horrid pinafores, an'—an' the back-boards—but—but I'm not sure of that even,” concluded Jeanie with her usual frankness.



Jeanie tossed the curls back from her rosy face and laughed.

CHAPTER IV.

A SECRET.

"I have a secret to tell
Between you and me and the post,
And which of we three will keep it best?
Well—whisper! *I think the post.*"

—*Nursery Ballads.*

THE sun was setting, and the western heavens were bathed in a beautiful glory of gold. The rooks were flying homewards, cawing and chattering—to their nests in the topmost branches of the churchyard trees. The pleasant restfulness of a summer's evening lay upon the pretty country scene. It was that hour when :

"Even fall descendeth
Over mead and hill,
Peace her angels sendeth,
And the world grows still."

The lambs had gone to bed among the dewy daisies and buttercups, and the little birds only twittered sleepily in the leafy trees. Jeanie and Effie sat on a rough wooden bench, just outside the garden-door of Rose Villa, and ate their supper of oatmeal porridge out of little old blue china bowls. Chum lay at their feet, watching them affectionately, albeit somewhat drowsily ; and Grip, the raven, hopped up and down the path, and drew corks in his most animated style.

The children's father had been hastily summoned to some poor patient far away in the wilds of the South Downs, and might not be back till midnight, and the servants were busied in the kitchen, so Jeanie and Effie were alone. It was nearly their bedtime, and they were wishing that it was not, after the manner of youthful persons of their years.

"Bedtime is a bother," said Jeanie, "I should like to sit up till twelve o'clock, like papa does. I shouldn't be tired, I'm sure."

"But don't you remember, Jeanie, when we went to Dolly Paget's party, an' sat up till ten o'clock, we were *awf'ly* sleepy 'for we got to bed? You were so sleepy that you said you thought you'd go to bed just as you were, in your best party frock."

"That was six months ago, Effie. We're older now."

"Six months is quite a short, little time."

"No, it's not. I growed a whole inch in six months; papa said so," responded Jeanie, with her usual fine disregard for grammar.

"Listen, Jeanie, I've a secret to tell you. I thought of it all my own self, an' it's a very nice secret. I b'lieve you'll like it." Effie's voice was lowered mysteriously.

"A secret? What's it about?" Jeanie was a very curious young person. This was not Miss Brady's fault, who constantly impressed upon her the startling fact that "curiosity killed the cat," without producing much impression on the volatile mind of her somewhat trying charge. "What's it about?" she repeated eagerly.

"It's about fairies," whispered Effie.

"O Effie! You don't mean to say you've seen one. Well, you might have called me!"

"Hush—h! No, Jeanie, I haven't seen one. But the secret is that I want you an' me to play at being them—fairies, the midsummer fairies, you know. To-morrow's Midsummer day." Effie had finished her porridge. She set down her little blue bowl, and looked at her sister with eager face and clasped hands.

"Play at bein' fairies—midsummer fairies? What's the good?" asked practical Jeanie in surprise.

"I'll tell you all about it," said Effie, who looked very much in earnest. "Listen! you know the little Baronet boy? Well, papa says he's very unhappy, 'cos he thinks the fairies don't love him, 'cos he can never find them. Papa says to-morrow he's goin' out in the garden early—I mean the little Baronet boy is, you know, Jeanie—to see if he can't catch the midsummer fairies at play. He read, you see, in a fairy-tale book that the fairies always have a ball very early in the mornin' on Midsummer day, an' so he hopes to steal out very, very softly, an' see them."

"Yes," said Jeanie. "But what's this got to do with you an' me?"

"I don't think he'll see the fairies, Jeanie. 'Tisn't many little children that they let see them."

Jeanie tossed her curls back from her rosy face and laughed. "Not they. They'll just put on their invisible mantles and jump on to the butterflies' backs, an' off they'll go."

"An' the little Baronet boy will be 'spointed—*dreffly* 'spointed."

"We can't help that!" responded Jeanie indiffer-

ently. "Here, Chum, you may finish my porridge, if you like."

Chum wagged his short tail joyfully, and licked the little blue bowl clean in about half a moment. Effie laid her small, sun-burnt hand upon her sister's arm.

"Jeanie," she said, "listen, an' I'll tell you my plan. It's a secret, an' only you an' me an' Chum must know."

"Very well. Tell me quick, Effie! I don't like waiting."

"We must get up very early, very early indeed, to-morrow morning, Jeanie, an' gather two big bunches of flowers, flowers out of our garden, an' hedge-roses and pretty field-daisies an' those nice grasses—quaker grass an' the others." The little girl stopped breathlessly.

"An' what are you an' me to do with all these flowers, Effie?" cried Jeanie in surprise.

"That's the secret," said Effie eagerly. "The secret I'm going to tell you. We will tie up the bunches of flowers with ribbons nice an' smart, and then we will fasten on to them two cards; each card is to have writing on it, 'For the little Baronet boy, from the midsummer fairies, with love.' We'll take the bunches then, Jeanie, and throw them right over the great, high, red-brick wall of 'The Chestnuts,' so's the little Baronet boy will find them when he comes out early to look for the fairies, an' it will make him very glad an' happy. O Jeanie, do you like my plan, do you?"

"It would be great fun," said Jeanie, gradually brightening into interest. "But, Effie, that awful high wall! How are we to throw the flowers over the top of it?"

Effie's face fell. "It's a *drefful* wall! But, we'll try, Jeanie, won't we?" And she was so eager that Jeanie, far the more impetuous of the two, grew eager also.

"We must make very pretty bouquets," she said, "fairy-looking bouquets, you know, Effie, and we'll have to be up early in the morning, almost as early as the sun."

Just at that moment Annette appeared at the kitchen door, and called to the children that it was their bedtime. For a wonder, Jeanie went to her room without remonstrance. She was thinking of Effie's wonderful plan for the next morning.

When Effie knelt down to say her evening prayers, she looked up at her sister and said very softly, "Jeanie, don't forget."

"Forget what?" demanded Jeanie, who was in the hands of Annette, and who was not enjoying the operation of hair brushing.

"Little Willie. You know we agreed that we'd pray God to make his poor mother better."

"So we did. I'm glad you 'membered, Effie. I'd quite forgot. My memory's so bad. It's got holes in it like a sieve, Miss Brady says."

"Stand still, Miss Jeanie, or I will be pulling all your hair out," remonstrated Annette.

"You're pulling it now," said Jeanie, with a grimace, as she dodged the descending brush.

"Of course. I can't help it, when you're so impatient like," replied Annette, in aggrieved tones. "Keep quiet, Miss Jeanie, do."

Jeanie restrained an impatient wriggle, and braced herself to endure the unpleasant performance with

what fortitude she could summon. At last, Annette released her in favor of Effie, who was a much quieter victim to the handmaiden's vigorous brushing.

Jeanie seized upon the little clock, in a neat red-leather case, that had been papa's last birthday present to the twins, wound it up, and set the alarm to four o'clock.

"Dear me, Miss Jeanie!" cried Annette, her brush poised in mid-air. "You're never going to get up at that hour in the mornin'?"

"Yes we are, but you musn't ask about it. It's a secret."

"Oh, very well." And Annette laughed good-humoredly. The children were often up and about soon after sunrise in summer time, gathering wild flowers or working in the garden. Dr. Allan made no objection to this early rising, rather regarding it with favor, and therefore Annette did not feel called upon to remonstrate. She tied up Effie's thick, curly hair, tucked her little charges into their small, dimity-hung beds, and departed, taking the candle with her.

Jeanie sat up in bed, with bright, wide-opened eyes. "I wish I could keep awake for a long, long time, right away to midnight."

"Why do you wish that?" Effie asked wonderingly.

"Don't you know? Why, 'cos it's Midsummer Eve, of course; an' on Midsummer Eve, at twelve o'clock, when everyone's in bed, the fairies come sliding down the moonbeams to have their frolic among the flowers. Oh! I'd love to see them. Effie, wouldn't you, too?"

"Yes, I should think so, awf'ly. P'raps we will one day, if we're very good," said little Effie solemnly.

"P'raps. But I'll never be very good," and Jeanie sighed.

There was silence for a few moments, and Jeanie lay back on her pillows. Presently Effie said, rather drowsily :

"D'you think you'll wake when the 'larm sounds?"

"Wake? Oh yes," responded Jeanie sleepily. "An' the fairies—p'raps we'll see the fairies——" she stopped short. Her eyes closed, and she was far away in that dreamland of childhood, where the fairies reign, and the month is always June; an enchanted land that only the children may enter. And truly—

"The world that only thy spirit knows,
Is the fairest world of the three."



THE QUAIN OLD GARDEN DOORS.

CHAPTER V.

THOSE MIDSUMMER FAIRIES.

“Ding! dong! ding, dong, dell!
Don't you hear the fairy bell?
Midsummer fairies are abroad,
Dancing on the fresh green sward;
Frolicking among the flowers,
Through the dewy morning hours.
If you'd catch them, little one,
You must rise before the sun!”

—*Nursery Ballads.*

LITTLE Sir Bernard Bentinck, a town-bred boy, was not accustomed to early rising, but on the morning of the twenty-fourth of June, he awoke soon after five o'clock, and, springing up in bed, rubbed his eyes vigorously.

"Midsummer day," he said aloud, although there was no one in the room to hear him. "An' now I'll catch those fairies at last."

He tumbled out and slipped on his clothes pretty quickly. He could manage this without assistance, for he always insisted upon dressing himself, much against Adela's wishes. Then he knelt down and hurriedly said the morning prayers that he had been taught to repeat but not to understand.

The pretty chiming clock in the tapestry-hung corridor was proclaiming the quarter-past five, with its musical silver bells, when he softly opened his bedroom door. He stole along the corridors on tip-toe, fearful of awakening his mother, or Adela, and creeping down the wide, oaken stairs, reached the garden door unheard. It was locked, but the key was in the lock, and not hard to turn. A moment later and the little boy stepped out into the beautiful old garden, that seemed all sunshine and roses, sweet sights, and sweet fragrance, this delicious June morning.

"It is lovely," Bernard whispered to himself wonderingly, and he paused a moment to gaze with admiring eyes upon the exquisite scene. "It's lovely," he repeated softly, "fairyland can't be beautifuller than this!"

Then, remembering the object of his early rising, he quietly closed the door behind him, and ran down the garden to his favorite spot, a rose-covered arbor near the lake. Surely this was a place fit even for fairies, bathed as it was with morning sunshine and glistening with early dew?

But no elfin laughter, no sprite-like, dainty form greeted the little boy. The arbor was untenanted,

save for the birds that fluttered away at his approach. He stood disappointed in the flower-hung doorway, and then turned away sorrowfully.

"The fairies don't love me," he said, with a suspicious catch in his voice. "They know I'm a town child, an' they always run away from town children, the fairy-tale book says so."

He stood still for a moment, his little head bent despondently. Then, renewed hope darting through his mind, he ran over the smooth green sward of the lawn, and across the terrace to the older portion of the garden, close up against the great red-brick wall that so entirely shut off the "The Chestnuts" from the village street. The red-brick wall, that was so bare and ugly from the street side, was pretty enough on the garden side, for it was closely covered with well-trained fruit trees and creeping plants of Japonica, passion flowers and white roses, with one rare, sweet magnolia plant. Beneath the wall was a well-kept, wide flower border, and, parallel with the border, a gravel path that divided it from a smooth velvety lawn, that had, in days gone by, been a favorite bowling green. This all comprised the older portion of the garden, and had existed at a time when the newer parts had been simply a field, and the smart lake a humble duck-pond. Fairies, as all the world knows, prefer old haunts to new, and therefore Bernard, breathless with eagerness, and with wide, searching, hazel eyes that nothing escaped, hoped to find them in this spot, that was a living memory of years that were told.

But no fairy revels broke the stillness of the old garden, and the flutter of bird wings, the hum of busy

bees, flitting among the June flowers, were the only sounds that fell on little Bernard's listening ears.

The child stood still upon the grass, his pretty baby face upturned, his expression one of the most eager expectation. He would have made a charming picture thus, with the deep blue sky of a June morning overhead, and a background of luxuriant summer blossoms.

"Dear fairies," he said softly, "I love you. I don't want to hurt or frighten you. Won't you let me see you? Or, if I might, just hear the flutter of your wings?"

Then, what seemed to Bernard a most wonderful thing happened. Suddenly two great bunches of sweet-smelling wild flowers flew over the high garden wall, and alighted on the turf at his feet. He picked them up with eager little hands, and read the labels attached; on each label was written :

"For the little Baronet boy, from the midsummer fairies, with love."

* * * * *

Lady Bentinck was sitting up in bed, taking her morning cup of chocolate, when a little, eager figure, in a blue and white sailor's suit, burst into the room with joyful and delighted cries.

"O muvvy, look, look! The fairies, the dear, little midsummer fairies have sent me some flowers, such beauties. Smell, smell. Aren't the fairies kind, mother? Oh! I love them so."

Lady Bentinck looked at the fragrant field blossoms in surprise, which deepened when she read the labels attached to the bouquets.

"The flowers are sweet," she said smiling. "But I can't say much for the fairies' writing."

"Oh, never mind that, movvy. I daresay they don't go to school in fairyland; it wouldn't be fairyland if they did, you know. Aren't the flowers dear things?" And Bernard touched them caressingly.

"Did you see the fairies who brought them, Bernie?" his mother asked, still smiling.

He shook his head.

"No; the bouquets just flew over the garden wall. Perhaps they are fairy bouquets, an' can fly like as if they had wings," he added, in awe-struck tones. "D'you think that's it, movvy?"

"I don't know," she answered. "It's very mysterious. But, my little boy, you are up very early to-day! Do you know it is only just seven o'clock?"

"I've been up since five," said Bernard. "I got up early, an' went out into the garden, 'cos I hoped to catch the midsummer fairies, an' then I found these lovely flowers. I wanted to come an' show them to you before, movvy, but Bevan wouldn't let me in 'fore seven. She's a cross maid, an' I wouldn't keep her if I was you," he concluded, oblivious of the fact that Bevan had entered the room to fetch her mistress' tray, and must hear all he said. This spoiled child had not been taught to show consideration for the feelings of servants.

Lady Bentinck laughed carelessly.

"She dresses my hair too well for me to part with her, and is altogether too valuable, Bernie. Besides, I'm a lazy being, and don't care to be disturbed early, even by my little boy."

"I'll go an' put the fairy flowers in water, I think,"

said Bernard, gathering the sweet, wild blossoms up with eager, little hands. "But first I must show them to Timmy. Timmy! Timmy!" and he ran out of the room, calling to his mother's little companion at the top of his shrill, childish voice.

* * * * *

During breakfast Bernard could speak of nothing but his wonderful adventure and the lovely fairy flowers. He was brighter than he had been for many days, and seemed, to Lady Bentinck's great joy, to have recovered the high spirits he had enjoyed before his illness.

The meal was just over, when Brace brought a note, which he handed to the little Baronet.

"A letter for me!" cried Bernard surprised, for his correspondence was extremely limited. "An' it's got no stamp."

"No, sir; Doctor Allan left it."

Bernard tore the envelope open eagerly, and quickly read its contents.

"Listen, muvvy," he cried. "Listen to this! It's wonderful." And he read aloud, in a tone of mingled awe and delight:

"The Midsummer Fairies request the pleasure of Sir Bernard Bentinck's company at tea, in Leafy Town, to-day, at four o'clock.

"P.S.—Please come to Rose Villa at a quarter to four, and we will show you the way."

"Dear me!" said Lady Bentinck. "That's a charming invitation. I wish the fairies had asked me too."

"I'll tell you all about it when I come home," Ber-

nard replied consolingly. "An' you shall hear too, Timmy dear. O Timmy, d'you think Leafy Town is in fairyland, do you?"

Miss Timms had to confess a complete ignorance as to the geography of the fairies' country.

"I don't think there are any fairy maps published," she said smiling.

"I will draw one for you when I come back," promised Bernard, whose little mind was brimming over with happiness. "Muvvy, isn't it funny that I'm to go first to Rose Villa. Is Doctor Allan a friend of the fairies, d'you think? Is that it?" he asked eagerly.

"I suppose so," murmured Lady Bentinck abstractedly. She was sitting in a deliciously luxurious hammock that was slung in the verandah, and, absorbed in the thrilling contents of a yellow-backed sensational novel, had no attention for her little son.

"Come, Bernie," said Miss Timms, holding out her hand to him, "and we will go and sit in your favorite arbor, and I will read to you. You will only get hot and tired if you run about and play this sunny morning and then you won't be fresh to enjoy the tea-party in Leafy Town."

"What will you read to me? A fairy story?"

"Fairies—always fairies," laughed Lady Bentinck, glancing up from her book.

"It's because I love them," said little Bernard earnestly. "I love them *awf'ly*, the dear, beautiful things, an' most special those that brought the flowers—the midsummer fairies."

"Come and kiss me, you funny old-fashioned boy!" cried Lady Bentinck.



"I'M SURE THERE ISN'T A DEARER DOGGIE IN ALL THE WORLD."

CHAPTER VI.

A PICNIC IN "LEAFY TOWN."

"The year is young and the world is gay,
The sun shines out with a golden sheen,
The sweet birds twitter and sing all day,
And endless delicate shades of green
Are creeping over the woodland brown,
For life is waking in 'Leafy Town.'"

—H. M. WAITHMAN.

Soon after three o'clock little Sir Bernard went to dress for the "fairy picnic."

"I'll wear my new white suit, Adela," he said. "I want to look very nice for the fairies."

"You'll never put on that lovely costoom just to

play in them durty woods, Sir Bernard!" Adela remonstrated.

"Yes, I shall, an' 'sides the woods aren't dirty."

So with a sniff of indignation Adela got out the new white suit. It was a very pretty suit of corded velvet with a silk waistcoat, adorned with silver buttons, and a silk scarf tied round the waist. It was a fanciful, girlish dress, and would have been decidedly unbecoming to most boys, but Bernard, with his slender little figure, baby face, and soft, dusky curls, looked very nice dressed in it, and more like some little prince from the pages of an old-world fairy tale than a little modern Englishman.

When he was dressed and ready to start Adela looked at him and sighed profoundly.

"What is it?" asked the little boy.

"Ah! Sir Bernard, I'm sighing for your pretty soot. It will soon be spoiled in those dreadful woods! 'Tis only fit for Hyde Park, and it's really painful to see it thrown away in these outlandish parts."

"What nonsense, Adela! Why, the fairies wear most beautiful dresses, and lovely sparkling jewels, an' they never spoil them. Put on Tootsie's best harness, the blue one with the bells. She's comin' with me."

"Well, if she does you may depend upon it Dr. Allan's nasty fox-terrier dog will eat her."

"Do you mean Chum? No, I'm sure he won't. He's a very nice dog indeed. When the Doctor comes to see me he brings him with him and makes him beg, and do all sorts of clever tricks, an' I give him biscuits an' sugar. Him an' me is great friends. Good-bye, Adela, I wish you wasn't so silly. You might

be nice p'raps, if you wasn't. Come, Tootsie." And little Sir Bernard ran off with his mother's fat pug dog at his heels.

Brace walked down to Rose Villa with his little master. It was a hot, sunny afternoon, and the streets of the little town were thick with dust.

"This is Rose Villa, Sir Bernard," said Brace, pushing open the garden gate.

"What a little house! It looks like a doll's house," exclaimed the child.

"I shouldn't mention that there fact to Dr. Allan if I was you, sir," Brace said in his usual respectful tones, and with a suppressed grin. "He mightn't like it."

"P'raps not. But I shouldn't mind if I was him. It must be rather fun to live in a doll's house. Ring the door bell, Brace, an' then go away. I can take myself in. I'm not a baby," added Bernard with dignity, and he drew up his tiny figure in such a comical way that the solemn manservant could scarcely restrain a laugh.

"Very well, sir," he said with commendable gravity, and proceeded to obey the peremptory orders of the little Baronet.

The gate had scarcely closed behind him when Annette opened the door. Bernard thought she looked very pleasant and good-tempered, with her rosy face and bright, cheerful bearing.

"Is Dr. Allan in?" asked the little boy.

"No, but the little ladies are expecting you, sir, so please to walk in."

The little ladies? Who could she mean? The fairies, perhaps. Yes, of course that must be it,

thought Bernard, as he followed her into the little drawing-room.

Annette put a chair for the youthful visitor, and then left him, closing the door behind her. Bernard looked about him curiously. It was a very small room, the smallest room the little Baronet had ever seen. But it was bright with flowers and the windows were fitted with pretty rose-colored blinds, which had been drawn down on account of the hot sunshine of the summer's day.

"It's just like a doll's house," murmured the child wonderingly. "So little an' so pretty. P'raps the fairies live here with Dr. Allan. I wonder if they do?"

"You're a goose! you're a goose! Ow! ow! ow!" cried a shrill, hoarse voice, suddenly.

Bernard was so startled that he sprang off his chair and looked about him in bewilderment. There was no person to be seen, and he decided that the remark must have proceeded from some invisible sprite of an unfriendly turn of mind. His proud little face flushed crimson. He was not accustomed to being called by rude names, and the new experience was far from agreeable to him.

"You are not very p'lite," he said, addressing the invisible one in his most dignified manner.

"Ow! ow! ow!" cried the hoarse voice, derisively. "Oh, what a surprise!"

This was more than Bernard could stand.

"I think I will go," he said, slipping down from his chair. "I—I don't want to stay here."

"Ow! ow! ow!" responded the unseen one, apparently unmoved by this piece of information. There

was a loud flapping of heavy wings, and Bernard, guided by the sound, turned his head sharply to see a large green parrot perched on the top of its cage and regarding him with wicked little bright eyes.

"Oh, it was you that spoke, was it?" said the little Baronet, and broke into a merry laugh. "Well, you're only a bird, and so I don't mind what you say. But your manners are drefful—drefful, an' I wonder the fairies haven't taught you different."

The door was opened sharply, and two little girls in simple brown-holland blouses, and big, shady, white linen hats, bounded into the room—bounded, for they neither walked nor ran, but entered like some fresh, boisterous breeze straight off a sunlit summer sea.

"Oh, how d'you do?" cried Effie.

"We're so glad you've come," cried Jeanie.

"An' it will be lovely at Leafy Town this nice day," said Effie.

"You're sure to love it. Everyone loves Leafy Town," exclaimed Jeanie.

Each took the little Baronet by the hand, and he stood between them thus, looking up into the bright, rosy faces with wondering eyes. Then he spoke slowly, sadly.

"But you're not fairies," he said. "You're not fairies, after all."

The two little girls exchanged expressive glances, and their eyes fell under Bernard's questioning gaze.

"No, we're not fairies," Effie answered penitently. "We're very sorry, but—but it was only make believe—play—those midsummer fairies . . . this morning, you know." She spoke falteringly, humbly. "We didn't mean to be unkind," she continued in a low

voice. "We only meant it for fun, an' then papa 'splain'd to us that—that it wasn't right to pretend, not even in a little thing like that, an'—an' then he said we might ask you to come here an' tell you ourselves how it was. Are you angry, little Baronet boy? Please try not to be. We didn't think it was wrong, you see."

Bernard had listened to her earnestly.

"I'm not angry," he said gently, "only a little 'spointed. I—I can't help being 'spointed, 'cos I did so long to see the pretty fairies." His beautiful hazel eyes filled with tears. He was only a very little boy, you see, and in many ways he was younger than most children of his age. "An' did you send the flowers too—the flowers with the writing cards on them?" he asked.

"Yes," said Jeanie, her fair little face flushing painfully. "We did. We threw them over the wall, an' we thought you'd be pleased and think the fairies had brought them, an' would never find out that they hadn't. We didn't know till we told papa, an' he talked to us about it, that it wasn't right. Do forgive us, little Baronet boy, we are so sorry."

"An' we are going to take you to Leafy Town, where the *real* fairies live," Effie told him eagerly. "P'raps we'll see the fairies there, one never knows. You'll be friends with us, won't you, little Baronet boy? Jeanie an' me will be so glad if you will, an' so will Chum. You know Chum, don't you? Papa took him to see you."

Who could resist such pleasant friendliness? Certainly not little Bernard, who had so often longed for the society of children of his own age.

"I'd like to be friends with you *awf'ly*," he said eagerly, "if you'll let me. You are very pretty an' nice, nearly as pretty as the *real* midsummer fairies, I should think."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Jeanie, laughing. "No one's as pretty as the fairies. But it's very nice of you to forgive us, little Baronet boy," she added earnestly.

"You mustn't call me that, it's so funny sounding," cried Bernard, laughing. "My name's Bernard, and mother and Timmy always say Bernie. Please say Bernie, too. An' what are your names? Fairy names, I s'pose?" he added mischievously. "Silverbell an' Goldenwings, or somefin' like those—eh?"

"No, no," said Effie, shaking her curly head and laughing, "only Effie an' Jeanie. Effie's me, an' this is Jeanie. Now we must start for Leafy Town or we shall never get tea ready before papa comes. Poor old Blinkers must be tired of waiting too."

"Who's Blinkers?" Bernard asked curiously.

"He's our donkey, an' a reg'lar darling," answered Jeanie. "When we first had him he was quite a baby with very long thin legs, an' he would do nothing but skip and prance. But he's older an' sensibler now an' he goes like a lamb in harness, Arthur says so, an' Arthur's a groom, so he ought to know all about horses an' donkeys. He's a musi—musician too," added the little girl proudly, "an' plays very beautiful on the concertina. He can play a lot of tunes, an' sometimes he sings too. That's very nice."

"He must be awf'ly clever," Bernard said admiringly.

"Oh, yes, papa says he's a very talented young man."

"What does that mean?" asked the little boy.

Jeanie was obliged to reply that she didn't know, but that, of course, it must be something highly desirable.

"Cats have talons—talons that they scratch with," Bernard said thoughtfully. "P'raps it's somethin' to do with that."

Jeanie's blue eyes opened very wide.

"Oh, no," she exclaimed quickly. "Arthur doesn't scratch. He's much too nice. When you know him you'll see that he couldn't think of doing such a nasty thing."

"Jeanie, Jeanie!" cried Effie, "make haste. Annette says it's half past four. We shan't be ready for papa if we don't make *awful* hurry, an' that will be drefful."

Jeanie took Bernard's hand, and they both ran out into the garden. A neat little equipage was drawn up before the gate, a well-groomed donkey, his head ornamented with bright scarlet braid, jingling bells attached to his harness, and a tub-shaped, varnished cart, in which were already seated Effie and Annette, Effie holding the reins and Annette with a big white umbrella over her shoulder. Chum stood up in front, his fore paws on the splash board, his little head held knowingly on one side, waiting for the start.

Jeanie and Bernard scrambled in, and upon Effie's saying, "Gee up," the obedient Blinkers started off at a steady jog trot.

"What a good donkey," said Bernard, "you don't have to beat him at all."

"Beat Blinkers!" cried Effie. "Oh, we should never think of such a thing."

"Most people beat donkeys," remarked the little Baronet in matter-of-fact tones.

"That's 'cos they don't know better," said Jeanie. "Kindness is better than beatin', papa says so, an' papa knows everything."

"Dr. Allan is your father, isn't he?" asked the little boy. "Yes, he is a very clever gentleman, an' very kind. When I was ill, he came an' made me well."

"You live in London, don't you?" said Jeanie. "We've never been there; we've never been anywhere 'cept Bumbleton. Is it nice in London?"

"No," answered Bernard promptly. "Not nearly so nice as the country. Tootsie and me don't like it half so well."

"Who is Tootsie?"

"She's muvvy's little dog, an' I wanted her to come with me to-day, an' Adela dressed her in her best blue harness with bells, all on purpose. But when we got to your garden gate, she ran away home. I think she felt shy."

"Poor little thing," said Jeanie. "Tell us about London, Bernard, please. What is it like?"

"It's all houses," answered the little boy, "rows an' rows an' rows of houses. An' there's shops, an' a great big garden, called Hyde Park. I don't know any more. Muvvy could tell you better. I can't 'scribe things. When I try to 'scribe at lessons I always get all muddled up. It's so puzzling."

Blinkers had subsided into a walk, for they were ascending a hill. It was a pretty road, cut across the common, and soon opened on breezy heights commanding pleasant views of the surrounding country.

Then Effie turned Blinkers's head, and he left this highway for a grass path. It was all ruts and lumps and little hillocks, was this grass path, and the donkey-cart swayed like some rocking boat.

"Oh, please to stop Blinkers, Miss Effie," cried Annette red and breathless. "I'll soon have all the life shook out of me at this rate. I'd rather get out and walk."

"We're nearly at Leafy Town, Annette, so you may as well sit still," responded Effie, who seemed to be quite unaffected by the jolting.

"Well, 'twill be a mercy if all my bones aren't broken first." And Annette clutched wildly at the side of the cart as it bumped over a big stone.

"Do you mind the shaking, Bernard?" asked Effie, smiling at the little Baronet.

"Of course he don't, 'cos he's a boy," cried Jeanie.

"It's rather like crossing from Dover to Calais on a rough day," he said smiling.

Suddenly Blinkers stopped short with one final jolt, and Effie, throwing the reins on his back, sprang to the ground.

"Oh, joy! here we are at Leafy Town," shouted Jeanie boisterously as she scrambled out of the cart followed by Bernard.

The little Baronet looked about him wonderingly. The children stood on the margin of a large and pretty pine copse, that was softly carpeted with moss and fir needles and tufts of graceful, waving ferns. Bathed in the blue mist of a hot summer's afternoon, and with the golden sunshine slanting through the branches of the tall and slender trees, this miniature forest presented a picture of such delicate beauty as not even

the most skilful and artistic brush could have reproduced.

"Leafy Town!" repeated Bernard, looking about him with wondering eyes. "But Jeanie, it isn't a town at all, there aren't any houses nor shops nor nothin'," he concluded ungrammatically.

"Shops an' houses don't make *fairy towns*," said the little girl, "and this is a fairy town, least me an' Effie always think so. Don't you agree with us that it looks like it, Bernie? 'Tis all so pretty an' so *fairyish*."

"Yes, yes," he answered eagerly. "It does seem like that. An' have you ever seen any of the fairies that live here, Jeanie?"

She shook her head. "Not yet. But we may some day. Effie an' me's always hopin' for it."

"Some day when we are very, *very* good," added Effie, overhearing her sister's sentence.

"Must people be very good 'fore they can see fairies?" asked the little baronet in awe-struck tones.

Jeanie nodded her head vigorously. "*Awfully!*" she said.

Effie and Jeanie set to work in a business-like manner to unharness Blinkers, and when they had tethered him to a tree and had pushed the cart into a safe place, they helped Annette unpack the large picnic basket they had brought with them.

Bernard assisted in spreading the fresh white cloth upon the grass and in arranging the plates and cups in their places, and thought this occupation great fun. When his mother gave a picnic a bevy of well-trained servants attended and the guests sat down to a well-served meal, such as they might have partaken of at

home. Bernard considered this more Bohemian plan much preferable. He made himself as useful as possible to his great satisfaction and the detriment of his smart garments.

White velvet is a dangerously delicate material for country wear, and when Bernard had dropped a basketful of strawberries into his lap and had tripped up and fallen his length on the soft green carpet of moss, Annette remarked with consternation that his clothes were more red and green than white.

"Oh it doesn't signify," said the little Baronet, laughing. "An' how funny it looks, don't it? How muvvy will laugh when she sees me."

"It's to be hoped she will, sir," Annette returned somewhat grimly. "I know *I* shouldn't laugh if either of my little ladies here came home in such a pickle."

"Muvvy won't mind. I've got lots of other suits. Sides, I can have a new one made just like this. That will do nicely," the little boy concluded cheerfully.

"Clothes cost money," said Effie gravely.

Bernard laughed merrily. "*In course* I know that," he said. "But muvvy has got heaps o' money, heaps an' heaps."

He did not speak boastfully, for, always accustomed to wealth and luxury, and used to seeing acquaintances enjoying what money can give, he felt no undue or silly pride in such things. He only wished to reassure Annette and the little girls, who seemed greatly concerned about the spoiled condition of his smart clothes. And Jeanie and Effie, looking into his frank, earnest little face, knew this at once, for Bernard was not a child difficult to comprehend.

"There now," said Effie, flinging herself down upon the grass. "Tea's all ready an' I'm sure it looks very nice. Strawberries an' cream, an' bread an' butter, an' milk, an' best of all, cake and jam, that's only generally a Sunday treat."

"Is it?" asked Bernard, looking surprised. "I have cake and jam every day, an' on Sunday I have late dinner with mother and Timmy. I don't like jam much; I'm tired of it. So's Tootsie. She's very partic'lar, Tootsie is."

"Not like jam?" cried Jeanie, surprised. "Well, you *are* a funny little boy. Dear me! how I'd like to be you, having it every day."

"A contented mind is a continual feast, Miss Jeanie," said Annette looking up from the sewing with which she was busily occupied.

"Don't be like Miss Brady, Annette. She's always saying that sort of thing!" And Jeanie gave herself an impatient wriggle.

"It's not for you to teach me what to say, Miss Jeanie," retorted Annette in a dignified tone.

"Is she cross?" Bernard whispered to Effie. "I think she is. Why don't you send her away?"

Effie could not help laughing.

"Send her away!" she echoed. "Why, Bernie, she has lived with us for years an' years, ever since Jeanie an' me were little babies. I hope she will stay with us always."

"But she's only a servant," exclaimed the little Baronet, so loudly that Effie feared Annette would hear him.

"Hush—h," she said, laying her hand on his arm.

"It isn't kind to say that. You might hurt her feelings."

Bernard looked surprised for a moment and then he said, in a different tone, "P'raps I might. I didn't think of that."

"No, I'm sure you didn't," Effie answered, in her pretty, gentle way.

"You are very good, aren't you?" asked Bernard, glancing up at her with admiring eyes. "Nearly as good as the fairies, eh?"

"Oh no," cried the little girl flushing. "I'm not indeed." And then in a lower tone she added, "I only *try* to be good, you know, Bernie."

Just at that moment Annette called to the children.

"We'd best begin tea," she said. "Maybe your papa's been kept by some sick folk, Miss Effie, an' won't get here after all."

"Don't you think we might wait five minutes, Annette," suggested Jeanie, who was amusing herself by throwing fir-cones for Chum to run after.

"No, missy, it's already late, a good quarter past five."

Bernard was surprised to see how obediently his little companions complied with Annette's wishes. In their place, he thought, he would have simply refused to come to tea until it pleased him so to do. But Jeanie and Effie came without a word.

"I wonder why they're so good," he reflected, as he seated himself between them on the mossy ground. "I will ask them by an' by when Annette can't hear. P'raps she beats them an' they're afraid of her. How horrid! I'm glad she's not my nurse; Adela is better than her, any way."

That was a most delightful tea-party Bernard thought. He had never tasted such delicious strawberries and as for Annette's big homemade cake it was simply perfect. Chum sat up beside Effie, and his gentlemanlike behavior struck the little Baronet greatly. It was indeed a contrast to the rude snatching and snarling of spoiled Miss Tootsie.

After tea, the children helped Annette to pack away the things. This was not nearly such fun as unpacking, and Bernard, unaccustomed to doing what he did not care for, left most of the work to the little girls.

"Are you tired, sir?" Annette asked when he threw himself on the grass, leaving the others to finish the uninteresting performance.

"No. It's only I don't care to do that," he answered frankly.

"Don't you ever do what you don't care for, sir?"

Bernard shook his curly head. "No, I don't like to be bothered."

"We don't care to do this either, only it has to be done," said Effie.

"Don't you? I didn't think of that. Then I'll come and help you." And the little Baronet scrambled up from his mossy lounge, and volunteered such active assistance that the "packing up" was soon concluded.

"Thank you. You've helped beautiful," Effie said.

Bernard felt rewarded by her bright, approving smile. "I like to help you," he said quickly.

Jeanie stooped and kissed his pretty baby face in her impetuous way.

"You're a dear little boy," she exclaimed, "an' I know we shall love you, shan't we, Effie?"

"Yes," said her sister, "of course we shall."

Bernard was delighted to hear this. His little face fairly beamed with happiness.

"It's so nice to have you to talk to, an' play with," he told them. "Timmy's kind, but then she's got a bone in her leg, poor thing, so she can't jump about much."

"And doesn't your mother play with you?" asked Jeanie.

Bernard shook his head. "Her's too busy, her's *awful* busy."

"Busy?" echoed Effie in surprise. Could that beautiful, fairy-like lady whom Jeanie had named the "Blue Butterfly" be busy? It scarcely seemed possible. She looked too dainty and too lovely for the common daily work of life.

"Muvvy's busy goin' to balls an' parties an' theatres," the little Baronet gravely explained. "Very, *very* busy in the season. She has hardly time to breathe. She told me so."

"How drefful," cried both the little girls in a breath. And Annette turned away to hide a smile.

"When I'm big, I shan't go to balls an' parties," continued Bernard confidentially.

"What shall you do?" Effie asked wonderingly.

"I shall buy a big ship and sail all round the world, an' look for Fairyland, look an' look until I find it," said the little boy eagerly.

"Oh, that will be *lovely*!" cried the twins.

"You may come too," Bernard told them, magnanimously. "It'll be such a big ship that there'll be plenty of room."

"An' may papa come, an' Chum? We couldn't leave Chum behind," said Jeanie quickly.

"Of course, an' Tootsie shall come too, an' Billy, that's my pony. It will be great fun."

The children were quite delighted with this plan, and they sat on the grass talking it over earnestly, till the golden sun began to dip behind the distant hills, and the shadows of the tall pine trees grew longer and deeper.

Annette sat at a little distance with her sewing. Presently she looked up and said:

"We must be starting home in another half-hour, Miss Effie. Aren't you going to show the little gentleman the valley view before we go?"

"Oh, I'd forgot. How silly of me!" cried Effie, springing to her feet. "Shall we take Bernie to see the view now, Jeanie? It always looks so nice when the sun begins to get low."

The three children, Bernard between his little new friends, walked hand in hand through the pine copse. It was not very wide, and they soon emerged on the further side.

Then what a lovely scene flashed upon the wondering, little child of cities, such a lovely scene as his innocent eyes had never before beheld!

The pine copse that the doctor's children had named "Leafy Town," was situated on the crest of a knoll or hill that rose just on the margin of wide commons of gorse and heather with picturesque abruptness. Down below, in the plain, was stretched, like some fine panorama, a land of pleasant English pastures, of winding streams, and deep copses of pine and larch that stood out dark and distinct in the tender golden evening light. Over all lay the soft, beautifying mist of parting day—a summer's day.

"I didn't know that the country was so beautiful as this," Bernard said below his breath. "It's beautifuller even than the picture of the hayfield. I love it, I would like to have a little house here—just here where we are standing, and live in it always."

"Like the little house in the woods, where Snow-White lived with the seven dwarfs," exclaimed Jeanie eagerly.

"Look at the sun," said Effie, "he's going to bed. I a'mire sunset time awf'ly, don't you Bernard? The sky is beautifullest then, I always think," she added thoughtfully. "It's so nice to see the golden rays resting upon the earth, the fields an' the woods, an' the little far-away villages down in the valley. Sometimes I wonder if the rays are a sort of ladder, an' if the angels go up an' down it like the angels in Jacob's dream."

"Are the angels sort of fairies?" asked the little boy wonderingly. "I saw one once in a picture. It had long, long white wings, beautifuller than a swan's."

Effie looked at him in surprise.

"Don't you know about the angels?" she said. "Hasn't your mother told you about them? An' 'sides, you read of them in the Bible, Bernard. I 'spect you've forgotten."

He shook his curly head. "Mother says I'm not old enough to read the Bible yet. She says it's a book for only grown-up people."

Effie and Jeanie could not help exchanging glances of astonishment. There was an instant's pause, and then Effie said simply:

"The angels are beautiful spirits, and God sends

them to take care of little children, Bernard. They watch over us always and keep us safe."

"That's nice," the little boy said, looking up at her earnestly. "But we can't see them. They are like the fairies in that way, I s'pose," he added, "in—*invisible*, that's the word; it's a hard word, an' I couldn't remember it at first."

"Yes, they're invisible," answered Effie; "but they are always with us—always."

"With naughty children too?"

"Yes, they try to make them good."

Jeanie had not joined in the latter part of this conversation. She and Chum were playing at hide and seek among the gorse bushes, and enjoying a fine romp.

"Effie! Bernard! Come an' play, both of you," cried the little girl, rushing up to them, flushed and breathless.

The children needed no second bidding, and a splendid scamper they had on the breezy common, with Chum barking his delight and tearing on in front of them like some little noisy herald of fun.

Bernard had never enjoyed such a merry game. It brought the color to his little pale face, and his laughter echoed more loudly than that of his small companions. Forgetful of the dainty white velvet suit, he tore about like some little hill pony, his thick curls flying in the wind. For this brief space, at least, Lady Bentinck's spoiled child was as happy a boy as any in the universe.

"Miss Effie, Miss Effie!"

The children stopped their play as the call was wafted to them over the heather.

"'Tis Annette," said Effie, with a little sigh. "We must go."

"Oh bother!" exclaimed the less patient Jeanie. "We've not had half a game yet. Let's pretend we don't hear. It won't hurt her to shout for a little while."

Bernard laughed, but Effie looked rather shocked.

"Papa wouldn't like that, you know, Jeanie," she said. "Asides, it wouldn't be kind. Annette might think we were lost."

"Do stay, Effie," urged Bernard, in his most persuasive manner. "Just for five minutes, *do*. I'm so happy. I never had a real *country* game like this afore."

Effie smiled as she disengaged herself from his detaining hands.

"We'll just go an' ask Annette if we may play for five minutes more," she said.

"Oh, you're silly," cried Jeanie pettishly. "You know she'll say no. Annette always says no when she sees we want a thing."

"She must be a cross person. I'd send her away if I was your papa," said little Bernard decidedly.

Effie held out her hand to him.

"Come," she said, "we'll go an' ask, an' I really think Annette will say yes."

And Effie was right. Annette, lured by the beauty of the summer's evening, was not sorry for an excuse to linger in "Leafy Town."

"You may have another ten minutes' play," she said, in answer to Effie's petition. "And I'll sit on this bank, and wait for you. Dear me, Sir Bernard, how hot you do look. You're not tired, my dear?"

She spoke so kindly, that the little boy repented of his impetuously-spoken opinion of her.

"I'm rather hot. But we're having such fun, an' I don't think it will hurt me," he answered, quite nicely.

"Well, I hope not, I'm sure. We must wrap you up in my cloak for the drive home," said Annette smiling at his eagerness.

Then the romp recommenced. How they scamp-ered and shouted and laughed, those merry playf-ellows, running races over the smooth turf, and hiding behind the prickly gorse bushes, only to spring out upon each other with cries of glee. They were as happy and as careless as the little lambs capering about in the dewy meadows of the distant valley, happy and careless as only very young life can be.

"Golden days—where are they?
Ask of childhood's years,
Still untouched by sorrow,
Still undimmed by tears!"

Presently, tired out, they flung themselves down to rest in a sort of hollow in the side of a hill. It was a delicious spot, covered thickly with dainty, fragrant, wild hyacinth of purple blue. "Fairy bells," Jeanie and Effie called them.

"They ring them for their midnight frolics, and for the fairy weddings," Jeanie told the little Baronet.

"How I'd like to hear them!" he exclaimed eagerly.

"They only ring when little children are asleep," said Effie wisely.

"D'you think I'd hear them if I crept out o' bed in the middle of the night, and stole softly—ever so softly, you know—up here?"

"Oh, no, I'm sure you'd not. They would know

that it wasn't right for you to be out, and then they'd just fly away," cried Effie, horrified at such a suggestion.

"You funny boy!" laughed Jeanie, who took life far more carelessly than her little sister. "Why, you'd be frightened to come through Leafy Town in the dark."

"So I should," he said quickly. "I'm very silly about the dark," he added, with more humility than was his wont. "It's—it's so frightening. I won't never let Adela—she's my nurse, you know—leave me till I'm asleep, an' I always have a light burnin' in my room—all night. If I awoke and found I was in the dark, d'you know I—I believe really I'd scream like a baby." He looked at the two little girls with solemn and dilated eyes.

Jeanie broke into a peal of merry, rippling laughter, and the little boy's face colored sensitively.

"I'm not a baby about most things," he said, rather huffily. He was not accustomed to being laughed at.

Jeanie only laughed still, but Effie said in her grave, earnest way:

"Why are you frightened, Bernard? Tell me, will you?"

"Not—not while she's laughin' at me," he said, with an offended glance at Jeanie.

Jeanie became curious, and hastily suppressed her signs of mirth.

"Do tell us, Bernard. I'll not laugh any more," she exclaimed. "You know I didn't mean to be unkind," she added coaxingly.

The little Baronet looked mollified. Though quick-tempered and sensitive, he was not a sulky child.

"It's silly an' babyish, I know," he said, in a low voice, "but—but—I can't help it. I've—I've read about *things*—dreadful things, an'—an' I'm afraid of seeing them in the dark. They always come about at night. The books say so."

Effie and Jeanie looked at him with very round eyes.

"What things?" Effie asked quickly. "What things, Bernard?"

The little boy looked about him apprehensively, and then said, in a very low voice:

"*Things*—you know. Ghosts, an' ogres—an'—an' ugly frightening faces." He shuddered.

Effie looked at him wonderingly.

"Are you really frightened?" she asked, almost incredulously.

"Yes; aren't you?" He glanced from one little girl to the other questioningly.

"No," said Effie and Jeanie in a breath.

"You see," added Effie, in her earnest way, "we know that the angels are watching over us an' keepin' us safe, 'cos we ask God to let them, every night 'fore we go to bed—in our prayers, you know. We couldn't be frightened after that."

"D'you think the angels would take care of me too?" the little boy asked rather wistfully.

"Yes, I'm sure they would," Effie answered promptly. "That is," she added, "if you ask God to send them. You try, Bernie. You'll not feel frightened any more."

"That would be nice," he said with a little sigh. "I don't like to be silly an' babyish. It's horrid."

"Children, children. It is time to start home," called Annette, from the margin of the pine copse.

They had their hands full of wild hyacinths when they scrambled up the hilly common towards her. Bernard found a pure white blossom among his, and the little girls told him that he was most fortunate, for white hyacinths were always a good sign for the gatherer.

"Here, let me fasten it into your button-hole," said Jeanie. "That's it. How pretty it looks."

"I shall take the flowers to muvvy an' Timmy," the little fellow said happily.

"Who's Timmy?" asked Jeanie in her curious way. Curiosity was one of her weakest points.

"You shouldn't ask questions, Miss Jeanie," Annette interposed in a reproving tone."

"Timmy lives with muvvy an' me," Bernard answered simply. "She is very kind, an' I love her. She an' me is great friends always."

"Is she a little girl? Would she like to come an' play with us?" asked the irrepressible Jeanie, apparently unconscious of Annette's reproachful glances.

"No, she's grown up, an' has a bone in her leg."

"Poor thing! I hope I shan't have a bone in my leg when I grow up. Lots of grown-up people have it, an' it must be a horrid feelin'," said Jeanie earnestly. "Annette, have you got a bone in your leg?"

"I hope so, Miss Jeanie. I'd not get far without one," Annette returned with a grim smile.

"Annette is so funny," Jeanie whispered to Bernard. "I never can half understand her."

"I think she's nice," the little boy said. "She doesn't fidget like my nurse. I wish she took care of me 'stead of Adela."

Blinkers greeted them with a loud bray of joyful

welcome. He had cropped all the long grass that took his donkey fancy, and he had some time since arrived at the conclusion that he was tired of Leafy Town, and would like to go home. Effie and Jeanie soon buckled on his harness, while Annette stowed the picnic basket, her work, etc., into the cart. So quickly were these operations carried through, that five minutes later the little party were jogging homewards in the donkey-tub, Jeanie holding the reins, and Chum seated by her side in the place of honor.

Blinkers stopped short when he reached the familiar green garden gate of Rose Villa, but Annette said, "We'll go on to 'The Chestnuts,' if you please, Miss Jeanie, and see the young gentleman safe home."

It required some persuasion to impress upon Blinkers' donkey mind the wisdom of this proceeding, but after about five minutes had been expended in coaxing and entreaty, he deigned to move on at a very leisurely pace, and thus "The Chestnuts" was presently reached.

Little Sir Bernard bade his new friends a most affectionate good-night.

"I'd have liked to have stayed in Leafy Town always," he said. "It's so beautiful; the beautifullest place I've ever seen in all my life!"

He stood upon the entrance steps waving his hand to Jeanie and Effie until a turn in the road hid the donkey-cart from his sight, and then he ran into the house eager to tell his mother all that he had been doing.

"Where's mother, Brace? She's not out, is she?"

"Her ladyship's in the drawing-room, Sir Bernard?"

The little boy darted into the old-fashioned, tapestry-hung room like some stray beam of sunlight. Lady Bentinck was sitting by the open window enjoying the soft twilight of the summer's evening. She opened her arms and Bernard ran into them.

"Well, darling," she said, kissing his happy little face tenderly, "Did you have a nice time? And what about the fairies?"

"Why, muvvy, they're not fairies after all, only little girls named Jeanie and Effie. But they are very pretty, an' kind, and it's so jolly playing with them, you know. An'—an' Leafy Town's a'most as pretty as fairyland, really and truly, 'sides there are fairies there that come out at night when the hyacinth bells ring!" He stopped breathlessly.

"And you have had a happy time, *cheri*. I'm so glad," said his pretty mother caressingly.

"Ever so happy," he answered blissfully. "A regular country afternoon, muvvy, all 'mong the flowers."

"I have to go to London on Monday for two or three days, Bernie. Will you come with me?"

"No, I'll stay here," he said very decidedly. "That is," he added, "if you don't want me, muvvy. Will you feel lonely without me?"

"I shall not have time to feel lonely, dear. I have half-a-dozen balls, three dinner parties, a luncheon, and afternoons innumerable to occupy me. It is these engagements that take me to town."

"Poor muvvy! What a busy time you'll have. Why d'you go?"

"To seek—if not to find—amusement, *mon cher*. Bernie, aren't you tired of cabbages and cows?"

He shook his curly head.

"The country, you mean? No, muvvy, not a bit. I never shall be while I've got them to play with, Jeanie and Effie—those midsummer fairies, you know."

* * * * *

"You can take away the candle, Adela, an' you can go and have your supper," little Sir Bernard said cheerfully.

"But you'll never stay alone, sir, and in the dark, too!" cried the astonished handmaiden.

"Yes, I shall. You can go," replied the little Baronet, in his rather peremptory manner.

"Well, I never!" ejaculated Adela, with uplifted hands.

"Go away, Adela, go! I mean to stay alone this evening."

"You'll soon want me back, Sir Bernard. There's the bell at your side, you've but to touch it, and I shall be here. But, shall I really leave you, sir?" And the incredulous Adela lingered in the doorway.

She held the lamp in her hand, and its light flickered weirdly over the dark corners of the old room with its curious wooden panelling. The sensitive child shrank back timidly, his old fears upon him. Then with an effort, he said:

"Yes, you may go, Adela. I—I shan't want you."

"Very well, sir."

The door was closed, and instantly the room became submerged in darkness. Adela's dress rustled down the corridor, then the sound ceased and all was silent.

Little Sir Bernard's baby heart beat very hard, and his breath came quickly. This terror of darkness was an old-established fear that had haunted him ever since he could remember anything.

A cry rose to his lips, but it was bravely suppressed. Only two tears welled up in his beautiful hazel eyes, and plashed upon the pillow.

Suddenly the little fellow slipped out of bed and knelt down upon the polished oaken floor, clasping his hands.

"Please God," he whispered, "send the angels to take care of me, an' don't let me be frightened. Amen."

It seemed wonderful to him the sense of security and peace that instantly stole into his little mind, the happy calm that hushed his childish fears.

"Effie was right," he thought, as he laid his curly head upon the pillow. "God did hear me."

And when Lady Bentinck stole into that quiet room, ten minutes later, she found her boy fast asleep, a happy smile upon his baby lips.

"It's wonderful," she said, "wonderful. He has always been so timid at night, you know. And this evening, Adela assures me, he insisted upon her leaving him, and taking the candle with her. I hope he is well, that he has not overtired himself playing with those children."

Miss Timms, carefully shading the candle with her thin hand—a thin, nervous hand, that told too truly the story of a lifetime—leaned forward and looked earnestly at the sleeping child.

"I don't think you need feel anxious about him, Lady Bentinck," she said, quietly. "That's the color of health upon his cheek, and his breathing is quiet and regular. And see, he's smiling in his sleep. You know the old idea? No? Well, 'tis a pretty one. They say that when the children smile in their sleep angels are whispering to them."

"A quaint fancy," the other said, half carelessly, as she turned away.

Only a fancy? Ah, who can tell? We must enter the children's dreamland to discover; and that is bolted and barred against us grown folk. But the little ones know all the happy secrets of that mystic fairyland, and perchance their innocent ears may catch the murmur of an angel's whisper, the flutter of an angel's silvery wing, that is lost to our hearing, all dulled with worldly wisdom. For surely there is nothing strange, nothing incredible, in this communion of pure spirits, heavenly beings and spotless baby souls. And it is a pleasant fancy, and perchance more than a fancy that—

"All fresh from heaven,
Angels, who love the little children,
Whisper to them as they sleep,
Of holy, happy, heavenly things,
While, with widespread spotless wings,
Their loving watch they keep."



CHUM.

CHAPTER VII.

AFTERNOON TEA.

"When we and the world are young, life seems
Woven of happy days and dreams.

"What the leaves are to the forest,
With light and air for food,
Ere their sweet and tender juices
Have been hardened into wood,
That, to the world, are children;
Through them it feels the glow
Of a brighter and sunnier clime
Than reaches the trunks below."

—H. W. LONGFELLOW.

DOCTOR ALLAN and his little girls were seated at the breakfast-table on the following morning, and Jeanie was delivering a lecture to Chum upon the inexpediency of making frantic dashes at sundry small

errand boys, who, from time to time passed the window on their way to the servants' entrance, when Annette entered the room with a note upon a tray.

"I was to give it to the little ladies," she said, smiling, "But the address says different, for it is directed to 'The Midsummer Fairies.'"

"From Bernard!" cried Effie and Jeanie together. Then:

"You open it, Jeanie."

"No, *you*, Effie, you're the eldest."

"But you'd like to, an' I'd really rather you did," magnanimously.

"No, no, 'deed I don't want to, *truly*."

"Let papa open it, then."

"Yes, that's best. *You* open it, papa dear, please."

"But *I'm* not a Midsummer fairy, you know!" objected the doctor laughing.

"You're the fairies' father, an' that's the same."

So "the fairies' father" opened the note. It was a very smart note, written upon palest blue paper, adorned with silver crest and monogram, and ran thus:

"The Chestnuts,

"Saturday.

"Dear Midsummer Fairies,

"Will you and Chum come and have tea with me in the garden to-day, because it is Tootsie's birthday.

"Your little friend,

"BERNARD."

"May we go, papa? We may, mayn't we?"

"Our white frocks are quite clean. Annette washed them yesterday, and put in heaps of starch, papa."

"Effie, you are half suffocating me, and Jeanie, your grammar, in moments of excitement, is deplorable, and would cause Miss Brady a shudder could she overhear it. Yes, my little girls, you may go. Give Miss Brady my kind regards and ask her to let you off work at four o'clock to-day."

"Papa, you're a darlin'!"

"Stop a minute, papa dear, I *must* give you a hug."

"You must be quick about it then, Jeanie mine, for Bluebell is at the door and I have a long round before me. I may be kept out late, so I shan't take you little people with me to-day."

"Are you going to see little Willie's mother?"

The doctor nodded, and a grave look came over his nervous, kindly face.

"I greatly fear that poor Willie has no mother now," he said quietly.

The bright faces of the children clouded over.

"Poor little Willie," Effie cried in a voice full of pity.

"We were goin' to send him a little present, papa," Jeanie said, hesitating. "Would it—would it be right *now*? I mean if—if his mother——?" She stopped short, and looked up at him questioningly.

"It will be kind to send it in any case," the doctor answered. "Fetch it quickly, little one, for I really must be off." And he opened the door and hurried through the hall, and out into the June sunshine where Bluebell was tossing her head and whinnying her impatience at the garden gate.

The children came hurrying out with their little present a moment later, and gave it into the keeping

of Arthur, who was to attend to his master. It wasn't a very important present—only a pot of homemade jam, but it meant a little sacrifice on the part of the donors, for jam was a luxury at Rose Villa; the children had a pot of it on Sunday night, and that must last the week as best it would. So here was a week's jam going to little Willie, a voluntary offering gladly made by Jeanie and Effie, an offering that, simple though it was, perhaps, counted like the widow's mite, bringing its own blessing.

"Give Willie our love, papa," Effie said, "you won't forget, will you."

"I shan't forget. Good-bye, chicks." And the doctor drove away, the children standing by the little garden gate and waving their hands to him until he was out of sight.

"And now we'd better go and prepare our lessons for Miss Brady," said Effie cheerfully.

Jeanie's rosy face clouded over and she pursed up her lips in a pout.

"Oh! bother! I hate lessons. I would like to go an' play in the hayfields, all the mornin'! People oughtn't to do horrid lessons in June. I tell you what, Effie, we'll just go into the fields for an hour, and then we'll learn our things for Miss Brady. Come, we'll go at once. Chum, Chum! we're goin' in the fields dear, in the nice hay. You'll like that."

"Papa says it's best to learn the lessons first, an' play after," said Effie humbly. "Won't you do that instead, Jeanie dear? Papa always knows best."

"Yes; but he's not a little girl, so how can he tell how I feel? I know I shall do my lessons best, if I go into the fields first. Do come, Effie."

"By an' by, dear, but——"

"Oh, you're tiresome an' stupid, like the dreffly good little girl in the story Miss Brady read to us. Well I'd rather be like the bad little girl who was ate up by a bear, for there aren't many bears in England now 'cept in the Zoological Gardens caged up, so I'm not frightened. Come on, Chummy, an' we'll go an' play in the nice sweet-smellin' hay, an' leave cross Effie to learn her lessons."

Jeanie tied on her broad-brimmed linen hat and departed with Chum, slamming the door after her with unnecessary violence. The hayfield adjoined the little garden of Rose Villa, and Effie had a view of it, as she sat writing her copy in the drawing-room window. Jeanie looked very comfortable, lying in the soft fragrant hay and absorbed in a fascinating story book. The sun was high and the sky was deeply blue, a scent of wild hedge roses and honeysuckle was borne on the soft breeze that fluttered the page of Darnell's copy book. Effie couldn't help a little sigh, and just for an instant she laid her pen down. It was so beautiful, this glorious summer land, she longed to leave her work and go out and enjoy it with Jeanie. Then her eyes fell upon the copy book platitude before her. It was a curiously appropriate one, for Effie read—

"Duty first, and pleasure afterwards."

The little girl smiled and took up her pen.

Jeanie was sharp and even brilliant sometimes, and Effie was not a clever child; but Effie was a plodder, and the plodders are the people who get on best in the world and who take the prizes. That old tale of the "Hare and the Tortoise" presents a very fair simile of

an oft-told story, and must have been written, we may well think, to encourage those who are not clever, but who do their best. Effie remembered it and was comforted, as she sat in the warm drawing-room of Rose Villa, writing her copy with a hot, cramped little hand.

Jeanie came in at twelve o'clock, and pulled out her lesson books with impatient hands. She had not enjoyed her morning in the hay as much as she had anticipated. The flies had buzzed tiresomely, she told Effie, and Chum had fidgetted, and there really wasn't enough shade in that hayfield.

"I shall never get this French exercise finished before lunch," she grumbled, pushing back her curls from her hot little face. "And I've two pages of g'ography and a column of that horrid spellin' to learn. Effie, you might come an' look out the *dick-shunry* words for me. You've done all your lessons."

Effie, with one wistful glance at the hayfield, and the sunshine, and all the pleasant summer things, turned away from the window with a resolute air, and sat down beside her sister.

"All right," she said, and said it quite cheerfully too, for Effie never did things in a half-hearted way. "I'll look them out, an' we'll soon get the exercise done."

Jeanie did not thank her, but her sulky little face brightened, and she drew her exercise book towards her and set to work with a will.

The luncheon bell rang a few moments before Jeanie's lessons were finished.

"Oh, you've never been out this mornin', after all, Effie," the little girl exclaimed. "An' it's all my

fault," she added, with a touch of self-reproach in her tone.

"I don't mind. I liked to help you, Jeanie dear."

"How good you are, Effie! I wish I was as good as you!" cried Jeanie, and she flung her arms around her little sister and kissed her in her affectionate impulsive way.

Effie felt amply rewarded.

* * * * *

The pretty chiming clock in the upper corridor at "The Chestnuts" was proclaiming the half hour after four with merry, silvery bells when Brace ushered two very solemn-looking little girls, dressed in extremely starched white frocks and big linen hats, into the drawing-room.

Bernard rushed forward to greet his friends.

"I'm so glad you've come," he cried, and then he took their hands and drew them towards the window, saying eagerly: "Here they are, muvvy, here are those Midsummer fairies."

Jeanie and Effie felt rather shy when pretty young Lady Bentinck looked up and said laughingly:

"The Midsummer fairies! Straight from Fairyland, I suppose, Bernie? Well, you and I should feel highly honored by such a visit." They thought Bernard's mother the most lovely lady their young eyes had ever beheld, and her beauty, and her delicate, dainty dress, the silk cushioned chair she reclined in, and the jewels that sparkled on her little white hand fairly dazzled their simplicity.

But Lady Bentinck quickly seeing this hastened to put them at their ease, and her manner was so natur-

ally sweet and gracious, that this was easily accomplished.

It would not have been possible either to have remained shy or embarrassed, while Bernard chattered and laughed like some merry little magpie, appealing now to his mother, now to the small visitors, and answering his own rapid questions before anyone else had time to open her lips. Certainly Bernard was not shy. Never before had she heard such a chatterbox, bewildered Effie thought. She wondered what Miss Brady, who always laid down a law that little children should be seen and not heard, would say to such a boy.

"Bernie is delighted with your Leafy Town," Lady Bentinck said. "He is going to take me to see it one day, when I feel sufficiently energetic."

"I wish——" Jeanie began in her impetuous way, and then stopped short, her pretty little face flushing shyly.

"What do you wish?" the lady asked with the bright, sweet smile that seemed so irresistibly fascinating to her small new acquaintance.

"I was going to say that I wished you would let us drive you there in our donkey cart," said the child; "but p'raps you'd not like that. Still Blinkers is a very good donkey, he goes quite fast sometimes, doesn't he, Bernie?"

"*Jolly fast*," cried the little Baronet, enthusiastically. "He's a dear donkey. I've told you 'bout him, haven't I, muvvy? Yes, I 'member, I did last night 'fore I went to bed. We were sittin' here an' talking about the picnic at Leafy Town."

"I remember," said his mother. "Yes, Jeanie—

Jeanie is your name, is it not? I thought so, and a very pretty name it is—I should like immensely to go for a drive behind Master Blinkers. He must be a donkey of most superior powers and intelligence, I feel convinced."

Effie and Jeanie looked pleased, for the honor of Blinkers was dear to their youthful hearts.

"Please let us take you soon," Jeanie said eagerly. "Leafy Town is perfection now. Papa says so. It's always nicest in June, isn't it, Effie?"

"Yes, 'cos then the sun hasn't burnt up the green, an' all is fresh an' lovely, an' the birds are still singin'."

"They sing very nice," Bernard remarked; "nicer than my musical box."

"What's a musical box?" asked Jeanie, her shyness suddenly merged in curiosity.

"Haven't you ever see none?" the little Baronet said wonderingly.

Jeanie shook her curly head.

"'Splain it to me, Bernie. Is it pretty?" she exclaimed eagerly.

"I'll tell Brace to bring it," said Bernard, scampering off.

The doctor's children wondered greatly at the beautiful instrument, and could have listened to its various tunes for hours, but the little Baronet, to whom it was no novelty, soon tired of it.

"It's rather a stupid thing, I think," he said. "'T'sn't like a piano, it's not so nice, I mean. People can play any number of tunes on a piano, an' this box only plays twelve tunes—that's not much. Take it away, Brace. I don't want it any more."

Jeanie and Effie felt rather disappointed, when Brace obeyed this somewhat peremptory command.

"It's very pretty," Jeanie could not help saying, a little regretfully.

Bernard turned to her quickly.

"D'you like it? Would you like to have it for your very own? I'll give it to you."

"Oh, I didn't mean that," cried Jeanie, growing very pink.

"Don't you really like it then?"

"Yes, yes," said the little girl. "But it's so grand, so 'spensive, you know, an'—an' we've got nothing like that at home."

"An' we couldn't take it away from you," Effie hastily interposed.

"But I *want* to give it to you," Bernard answered in his determined little way. "I'd like you to have it. Muvvy will buy me another when I wish for it, won't you muvvy?"

Lady Bentinck laughed.

"I expect I shall have to."

"Tell Brace to send it to Rose Villa. It's too heavy for Jeanie an' Effie to carry," Bernard said.

"Very well, darling. I will give him instructions when he brings tea."

Jeanie looked up with wondering eyes at Bernard's mother.

"Are we really to have it?" she asked, half incredulously. "That grand, beautiful thing!"

Lady Bentinck smiled at her earnestness.

"I think so. It is Bernie's wish, and his wishes are always gratified."

Jeanie and Effie tried to thank the little Baronet, but he only said :

"No, no, 'tisin't kind of me a bit. I want you to have it an' so I give it to you, that's all," and then he held his hands up to his ears and refused to listen to any further demonstrations of gratitude.

"I must fetch Tootsie," he said, suddenly jumping up, "it's her birthday, you know, and muvvy an' I have given her a new harness, red leather with a great many little jingling bells. She looks so smart in it."

He ran out of the room and quickly returned, carrying fat little Tootsie in his arms. Jeanie and Effie were delighted with the funny fat pug dog, and Chum watched them jealously as they caressed and petted her. He was a well trained dog and, despite his injured feelings, refrained from as much as a snarl when Tootsie lifted up her squeaky small voice and barked her defiance at the stranger dog in the most ridiculous manner; but he looked huffy, and it was evident that he considered his little mistresses very foolish to admire such an absurdity as the waddling and highly decorated Tootsie.

"Let's go into the garden," Bernard said presently, and the children and their dogs ran out through the open French windows upon the lawn, where the shadows were growing longer with the waning of the afternoon, and the sun's golden glamor lingered lovingly among the beautiful, scented roses.

"Oh, what a great, big garden!" Jeanie cried, looking around her in wonder. "Isn't it 'normous, Effie?"

"Yes, it's lovely," said the little sister. "The

fairies ought to be here," she added, turning with a smile to Bernard.

"But they aren't," the little Baronet returned eagerly. "I've looked into all the flowers so carefully—oh, *ever* so carefully, an' they're not there, not one of them."

"What's that glimmering over there? It looks like—yes, it *must* be water," exclaimed Jeanie suddenly. "O Bernard, is there a pond in your garden? What fun! You might sail little toy boats on it, you know, that's a lovely game."

"It's a big pond, an' it's called a lake, an' there's real boats on it, that people can go in," said the little boy. "I go sometimes with Timmy, an' William's teachin' me to row."

"How jolly for you," Jeanie cried, rather enviously. "I wish I was a Baronet!"

"Oh, Jeanie!" exclaimed Effie, flushing sensitively.

"Well, I do," said the little girl, half defiantly.

"I don't care about it a bit," Bernard said, looking up at the little girls with grave, solemn eyes. "An' d'you know, I'd rather be just a poor boy if I could always live in the country. I'd be quite happy, an' I think, p'raps I'd be gooder too."

"You're a funny little boy," cried Jeanie laughing, but Effie stooped to kiss the sweet, earnest, little face, and said gently, in her simply wise way, "God has put us all to live in the right places, Bernie. Papa says so, an' papa knows everything, I think."

Presently Bernard suggested a game of croquet, and ran off to fetch Miss Timms to make a fourth player. Miss Timms was busy with a letter, but, of course, she put it aside at Bernard's request.

"I want you to come an' have a game with the Midsummer fairies an' me," he said, and led her forth in triumph.

The tea equipage was carried out to the lawn, and placed in the shade of a fine cedar tree. Jeanie and Effie were rather amazed by the variety of dainty cakes, the big silver bowl of strawberries and cream, and the tiny trays heaped up with choice bonbons that had been sent from Town. Afternoon tea to them meant milk and bread and butter, with jam on Sundays, and now and then plain cake as a great treat. They opened their blue eyes very wide when the little Baronet loudly lamented that the servants had forgotten his favorite hot scones, and their surprise deepened when he grumbled about the strawberries, saying peevishly that they were overripe.

Lady Bentinck joined the children and Miss Timms at the tea-table. She reclined in a delightfully-cushioned deck-chair, with a smart red parasol over her head, and looked like the incarnation of pretty luxury. Jeanie and Effie thought her lovely, they could hardly remove their wondering gaze from her. By-and-by, the lady's eyes met those of Jeanie, which were so earnest and admiring, that she asked her, smilingly, what she was thinking of.

"I was thinking of you, please," said the child, in her frank, impetuous way. "I was thinking that there aren't any ladies like you at Bumbleton. There are none so very, very pretty, you know, so—so fairy-like."

Jeanie spoke with no intention to flatter, but simply from her open childish heart, and Lady Bentinck knew this. Her soft cheek flushed, and she looked at the little girl with a very sweet smile.

"Fairy-like!" she repeated. "Why, you are the fairies, Jeanie, you and Effie."

"Only play ones. The real ones are gone, I think, for we can never find them." And Jeanie's bright face clouded over.

"Where d'you think they've gone, muvvy—those fairies?" Bernard asked earnestly.

Lady Bentinck laughed lightly.

"I'm sure I can't tell you, *mon cher*," she said. "I'm not in the fairy secrets."

"They live in dreamland, I fancy," Miss Timms remarked.

"Come an' have a swing; there's a jolly swing up near the stables," Bernard said to the little girls, when tea was over.

"A swing! Oh, lovely!" cried Jeanie. "But Effie doesn't like it, swingin' makes her head ache," she added, glancing at her little sister.

"Effie can stay with me," said Lady Bentinck. "I shall enjoy a nice little chat with her while you are away. Miss Timms, go with the children, please. I shan't know a moment's peace until they return otherwise."

Miss Timms hurried after Jeanie and little Bernard, who were already half way across the lawn, and Effie found herself left *à-tête-à-tête* with Lady Bentinck. She sat down on the smooth, soft turf, close to the deck-chair, and began to pull some tiny daisies rather shyly. She possessed none of Jeanie's *sang froid*, and she did not know what to say to this grand, beautiful lady; she wondered how her sister managed to speak to her so freely.

"It is a great happiness to my boy to have you and

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Jeanie to play with, Effie. He has always longed for little companions," said Lady Bentinck.

Effie looked up eagerly. She forgot her shyness in thinking of Bernard.

"Oh, we love to have him," she exclaimed. "He's such a dear little boy."

"You must often come here and play with him. I will speak to your father on the subject. Do you go to school?"

"No; a lady teaches us. Her name is Miss Brady. Jeanie an' I go to her every day. She's ill, poor thing, an' can't come to us."

"And who takes care of you when you are at home, for your father must be often out?"

"Annette; she's our servant. She came when Jeanie an' I were little babies, before our mother died," said Effie. "She's very kind."

"Do you remember your mother, little one?" Lady Bentinck asked gently.

Effie shook her head.

"No; Jeanie an' I weren't a year old when she died. But papa often talks to us 'bout her. We talk about her generally on Sunday evenin's, papa an' Jeanie an' me," added the child, "when everyone's at church, an' it's all still an' quiet. Papa says she wouldn't like us to forget her, 'cos she loved us so, an' he wants us to know 'bout her, 'cos one day we'll meet her in heaven."

There was such sweet sympathy in Lady Bentinck's lovely eyes, that shy little Effie forgot that she was a grand "grown-up" person, and a comparative stranger.

"I wish God had let mother stay with us," the little girl said. "I would so love to have a dear, beau-

tiful mother like you, and so would Jeanie, I know. But," she added quickly, "we've got each other, an' papa, an' so we musn't grumble."

Lady Bentinck bent and kissed the sweet, earnest face of the little philosopher.

"You're a good child," she said kindly. "I don't wonder that Dr. Allan is proud of his daughters."

And then Jeanie and Bernard came tearing across the lawn, calling to Effie to come and have a romp in the hay, that lay thick and fragrant in the lower meadow, while Miss Timms hurried after them, breathless, and anxious as the proverbial hen with one chick.

The soft, scented twilight of June, lay gently upon the drowsy country world, when Effie and Jeanie opened the little garden-gate of Rose Villa. Their father was in the armchair on the miniature porch—about which the blue veronica and the delicious mignonette grew. The children made a precipitous rush for him, and each established herself on a knee, much to their satisfaction, and to the total oblivion of the little doctor, who disappeared behind a mass of frilled and starched white frocks.

"We've had such a lovely time, papa!"

"An' O papa, have you seen it—the musical box?"

"It plays twelve tunes."

"An' two of them's 'Little Annie Rooney' and 'Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay.'"

"An' there's little bells, an' a sort of drum."

"Bernard has given it us for our very own. He doesn't want it any more."

"He's tired of it. 'Sides, he has another at home, in London, an' a organ too, with a handle to turn, like the men with monkeys in the streets."

"What a cyclone of intelligence!" cried little Dr. Allan, laughing. "My dear children, you are breathless. Pray rest yourselves before you issue another batch of the evening news. Yes, I've seen the musical box. It fills the drawing-room almost entirely, and is of such formidable dimensions, that Annette is reduced to despair. She says it must be kept in the garden."

"Oh, no, papa, we'll have it up in our room. I'll talk to Annette 'bout it. Have you missed us, papa? Did you hope we'd come back soon?"

"Of course I missed my little girls. But I'm glad you have had a pleasant time, Effie, you and Jeanie. You don't enjoy much society in this quietest of quiet spots." And the doctor sighed. There were times when he longed to give his little daughters such advantages as Bumbleton folk never dreamed of. But, with a narrow income and a poor practice, how was this to be accomplished?

"Papa, I wish that you an' Effie an' me was rich an' grand, like Bernard an' his mother. Don't you?"

This question seemed like the spoken echo of his own silent thought, and he felt reproached by it.

"Jeanie," he said quickly—"my dear little girl, we must, in the world, meet many who are richer and what you call 'grander' than ourselves, but that does not always mean that they are happier; and when we envy them, we are blind and foolish. The secret of happiness isn't wealth, and isn't grandeur, my dears. It is something deeper than those things, Effie. You can tell me what it is?"

"Somethin' in ourselves; a—a sort of quiet happiness that springs from trying to be good, isn't that it,

papa?" And the little girl looked up at him, half-shyly.

"I think so, my child. A peace that God puts into our hearts; a peace that neither adversity nor prosperity can remove."

"Don't you want to be rich an' grand, papa dear, don't you?" persisted Jeanie.

The doctor's thin face flushed sensitively. "Sometimes," he said, in a low voice. "Sometimes, I suppose we all do. No one can be quite indifferent to the good things of this world. But, Jeanie," and his voice grew very earnest—"they alone, can never bring happiness. You must learn that, sooner or later, my dear—and if you learn it sooner, it will save you much pain. They say," he added, speaking more to himself than to the children, and with a dreamy look stealing into his kind eyes, "that it's of no use to advise the young—that each must buy his own experience. Yes—perhaps so. But we must try—we can't help stretching out a hand in the hope that we may save from pain those whom we love."

Jeanie threw her arms about his neck, and gave him one of her impetuous, affectionate hugs.

"Dear papa," she said, "I'm not good—I was born naughty, I b'lieve. But I do understand a little—I think—and I'll try to 'member what you've said, because you're just the dearest papa that two little girls ever had!"

* * * * *

"If you please, sir, it's nine o'clock—and I do think as the little ladies ought to be a getting to bed." Thus spoke Annette, appearing in the porch

some ten minutes later, and regarding the doctor with reproachful eyes.

Annette could be severe, and she was severe on this occasion. The doctor, who esteemed her as a wise and practical person, whose care for his children was simply invaluable, looked conscience-stricken and uneasy.

"Dear me!" he ejaculated feebly. "Nine o'clock! So late as that? You don't say so? Why, I'd no idea. Yes, the little ladies shall come at once, Annette."

"There, papa, you're in disgrace!" laughed Jeanie, as the handmaiden bounced into the house without deigning so much as another word.

"Well, of course, it was thoughtless of me to let you sit up so late," he said meekly. "And I quite agree with Annette that 'early to bed' is the best motto for little people. Good-night, my dears. You must be off at once."

"Did you see Willie's mother to-day, and how is she, papa?" Effie asked, lingering for a moment when they had bidden him good-night.

"Wonderful to say, she is better. I thought her recovery impossible when I last saw her, but, a remarkable rally has set in, and I hope she'll pull through."

Effie and Jeanie exchanged glances.

"Papa, dear," Effie said quickly. "Jeanie an' I have prayed God every day to make the poor thing well an' to let her stay an' take care of little Willie. D'you think—d'you think—?" she stopped short.

"That this recovery is in answer to your prayers? Yes, my little girl, I don't doubt it."

Effie looked up at him with beautiful, earnest eyes.
“It’s so wonderful to think that God hears little children’s prayers,” she said softly. “It’s wonderful that he hears when there’s so many people speaking to him, an’ he’s far, far away upon his throne in heaven!”

“The angels carry the children’s prayers up to him,” said Jeanie. “Don’t you ’member, Effie, how papa read to us ’bout that angel who stands at the gates of heaven, an’ gathers the prayers in his hands, and when he touches them they turn into flowers?”

“The Angel Sandalphon,” the children’s father said. “According to an old legend in the Talmud, he stands, his feet—

‘On the ladder of light,
That, crowded with angels unnumbered,
By Jacob was seen as he slumbered
Alone in the desert at night.’

And the prayers as he gathers them turn into flowers,
and through—

‘The streets of the City Immortal,
Is wafted the fragrance they shed.’

It’s at least a pretty fancy. Fancy, did I say? Ah! I wonder how it is that we call all that is beautiful, delicate and poetic, fancy; and all that is crude and ugly, fact? It’s strange, but indisputable, that this is so.”

The children did not catch his last words, for they had hurried away in response to Annette’s impatient call. The twilight had melted into night, and the distant night-jar’s juggling note was the only sound that broke a rapt stillness. The doctor threw aside his paper, and went into the house.

CHAPTER VIII.

A HARVEST OF BLUEBELLS.

"Bluebells the news are spreading,
Ring a-ting, ting, ting, ting!
All the flowers have voices,
Lovely the songs that they sing.
How the bluebell rejoices,
Ting-a-ring, ting, ting, ting."

"The quivering air thrills everywhere,
One rippling sea of song."

It was Effie's idea, and it was to be "Papa's birthday treat." Jeanie and Bernard thought it splendid and delightful, and Chum wagged his tail when the children were talking "the plan" over, which meant that he thoroughly approved of it, so Effie said, and, of course, she should know. And Annette remarked that "they might do worse." So, altogether, papa was completely overruled, and he thought it expedient to submit with the best grace he could muster.

In the first place, papa was to have a complete holiday. Effie and Jeanie were quite determined on that point, and in the second there was to be a picnic—a real, beautiful picnic, on the wooded slopes of the South Downs, just above tiny Graffham village; a land of bluebells at this time of the year, a land of primroses rather earlier, a land of impassable snow and blocks of ice when winter reigned.

"Near the fairy ring, you know, papa; over the

crest of the hills," Effie said. "And papa, dear, Jeanie an' me have thought of such a nice thing. We are all to gather heaps an' heaps of bluebells, an' then, when we get home we'll tie them up in big bunches and pack them in a hamper, and send them to some poor little children in the London hospitals. We may do that, mayn't we, papa?"

Of course papa said yes, and, equally of course, he assented when Jeanie suggested that Lady Bentinck and Bernard, and Miss Timms should be of the party. It was an old-established privilege of the children that they should have the ordering of all things on their father's birthday, and it was a day that they looked forward to as one of the Fête days of the year.

Effie wrote Lady Bentinck a note of invitation in her very best round hand, and an acceptance was duly received. Annette became very busy, and barricaded herself in the kitchen, her mind absorbed in the making and baking of sundry pies and cakes. And Arthur put aside his concertina that he might give an extra polish to the shining trappings of Bluebell and Firefly, the doctor's horses.

At length the long looked forward to day dawned fair and cloudless, and Jeanie and Effie arose in a state of great excitement to present papa with an elaborately-beaded pen-wiper, and a kettle-holder, upon which was embroidered in silk of startling hue, "Polly put the kettle on," homemade productions, that had cost the little girls much patient trouble. The doctor was delighted with these offerings, and the kettle-holder was put into immediate use at breakfast, while the pen-wiper was installed in a place of honor in the study. Jeanie and Effie beamed with delight at their father's

praise, and it was a merry little party that partook of oatmeal porridge and toast in the small dining room at Rose Villa, and what cared they that the fare was simple, and the surroundings homely? for where peace is, there—and there alone—is plenty.

When breakfast was over the children helped Annette to pack the two big picnic hampers, which was, they thought, a delightfully exciting operation. While they were so busied Chum looked on with an interested air, and his head cocked knowingly on one side, fully aware that he was presently to have his share of these good things. Jeanie and Effie had given him a tub on the previous evening, followed by a vigorous brushing, and he looked charmingly white and clean, and well groomed, the beauty of his appearance being further enhanced by his best studded collar.

"You are much beautifuller than Tootsie, that you are, my Chummy," cried Jeanie, giving him a hug.

"I should think so!" said Effie. "Why Chum's the nicest dog in the world, the prettiest, and the goodest and the everythingest."

"Now, don't go a-crumpling of your nice clean frocks with that great heavy dog!" hastily interposed Annette. "Ah! Grip, you be off, you rogue." As the raven hopped up to the open hamper, and eyed some silver tea spoons, for which he had a great fancy, with wicked, little bright eyes.

"You're a thief, you're a thief!" shrieked Jacko, the green parrot, from his cage near the open study door, and immediately Grip retired discomfited.

"There now! That Jacko's too knowing to be canny!" cried Annette, lifting up her hands.

"He's a very sensible bird," said Effie. "Good Jacko, good old fellow! I'll fetch you a lump of sugar."

The picnic party started from Rose Villa at eleven o'clock in a hired wagonette to which had been harnessed Bluebell and Firefly. The doctor drove and little Sir Bernard Bentinck sat in the front seat, between him and Arthur, while the back of the carriage was occupied by Lady Bentinck, and Miss Timms, Jeanie and Effie, and Annette, also, of course, Jeanie and Effie's "Chum," who sat between them "as good as gold," as Jeanie said.

The drive to Graffham was delightful that fresh, sunny June morning. So pleasant was it that little Sir Bernard Bentinck told the doctor he wished it might last for ever. But he changed his mind when the carriage stopped at the base of the South Downs, and he saw the sloping, wooded hills, the deep glades blue in the lights and purple in the shades with a myriad bluebells, the pure white hawthorn bushes standing out clear and distinct like patches of fresh-fallen snow, and the tiny, sparkling brooklet bounding merrily over the hillside like a child at play. There could scarcely be a fairer spot than this, he thought, and he was well content to look forward to a day spent amid its wild, sweet beauties.

The carriage could go no further, for the ascent was steep and difficult, and the rough and rugged cart roads cut in the soft chalk well-nigh impassable. Everyone alighted, and Arthur took the horses back to the village inn. Dr. Allan and his little girls and Annette carried the picnic hampers between them, and the little party slowly climbed the grassy slopes until,

at last, after what seemed to Lady Bentinck a long pull, they reached the summit of the downs. Up here the air was charming, so fresh, so invigorating, and the little party of picnickers commanded a fine and extensive view of summer lands, well-tilled fields, pleasant homesteads, picturesque cottage-homes, with here and there broad commons of heather and gorse, girded by those deep-green belts of charming pine copses that beautify this part of Sussex, and remind those who know Bournemouth of that pleasant, sun-lit spot of southern England.

Rugs were spread upon the grass beneath the shadow of some splendid old oak trees, and the wearied climbers sat down to enjoy the view and the welcome refreshing breeze. The children took off their wide-brimmed hats, and fanned their hot little faces with them, and Bernard rested his curly head upon Miss Timms' lap.

"We won't gather the bluebells just yet," Effie said. "It will be better to wait a little, won't it, papa?"

"Most decidedly. And you will soon reap a harvest of flowers, for all around us is carpeted blue with them. A veritable fairyland, isn't it, Bernard?" said Doctor Allan, turning with a smile to the little Baronet.

"Bernie wants to catch the fairies, and keep them in a glass case, I fancy," laughed Lady Bentinck. "Isn't that it, *chéri*?"

"No, no, *muvvy*, you know it's not. But I want to see a fairy—if only one—*dreffly*. An' I don't believe I ever shall."

"I wish we could find the way to Fairyland," ex-

claimed Jeanie earnestly. "That's the thing to do. Once there we'd *have* to see the fairies."

"I'll tell you the way," said Dr. Allan smiling, "shall I?"

"Can you? Oh, can you really, papa?"

"Indeed, I can. Just shut your eyes and fall asleep. Fairyland, is situated in the regions of dreams, right over the border of sleep."

"O papa! I mean real Fairyland, not *dream* Fairyland."

"They are infatuated, these children. They can talk of nothing but the fairies," laughed Lady Bentinck.

"When you were a little girl, didn't you want to see them?" asked Jeanie curiously.

Lady Bentinck shook her pretty head and laughed.

"No, Jeanie, I was a practical, I might almost say sceptical, child. I don't think I believed in these fairies of yours."

"Didn't believe in them!" echoed Jeanie and Effie in a breath.

And Bernard said:

"O muvvy, that was a pity. I like to b'lieve in fairies and fairyland an' all those pretty things. They give me happy thoughts."

"Funny, old-fashioned little boy!"

"I should like to live up here in these woods," said Effie, looking around her with a little sigh of admiration.

"Like Maid Marian!" laughed Jeanie.

"Who was Maid Marian?" Bernard asked, lifting himself on his elbow. "Was she a fairy?"

"No, she was a person who lived years ago, in

those far away history-book times," Jeanie replied, "an' she married Robin Hood. He was a robber, but he only robbed rich people, never the poor, an' I always think that was nice of him. He lived in the woods with his follower Little John, and they dressed all in green—the color of the grass—so that they could hide easily if they wanted to."

"It must have been fun. I'd like to have known Robin Hood," said the little boy. "I wish he lived now. I wish we could see him coming up that grass walk over there under the trees with Little John an' Maid Marian."

"There would be a great procession, an' music, an' Robin Hood would ride a beautiful white charger, an' Maid Marian would be on a pillion behind him. Oh, Bernie! I can really fancy that I see them all," cried imaginative Jeanie.

"And I can really fancy that I see the little Fairy Queen Titania, and Oberon and Puck, and mischievous Robin Goodfellow!" laughed Lady Bentinck. "Come now, children, what other woodland dream-folk can your busy little brains conjure up?"

"But who was Titania, muvvy, an'—an' the other peoples?" demanded the little Baronet. "Story-book peoples, are they? I never read 'bout them, I'm sure."

"Do tell us 'bout them, please, Lady Bentinck," chimed in Jeanie.

"'Tis far too hot to tell anybody about anything," said the lady, but when the children persisted, she found herself embarking upon a simple version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Effie had taken no part in the foregoing conversa-

tion. She was talking to her father, as she sat beside him, at a little distance from the others. Dr. Allan had stretched himself upon the soft, warm turf, and lay with his straw hat tilted over his eyes, enjoying this unusual idleness, while Effie kept the flies off with a bunch of great dock-leaves, which she waved to and fro like some miniature punkah.

"Don't you love these big old trees, papa?" asked the little girl, as she looked up at the giant oaks, whose widespread branches shaded them. "An' doesn't it seem odd that they've been here hundreds an' hundreds of years, an' have looked down on so many different people?"

"Very odd. Their lives are longer than ours, Effie." And he quoted softly:

"Old friends, old patriarch oaks, a thousand winters
Will strip you bare as death, a thousand summers
Robe you life-green again. You seem as it were
Immortal, and we mortal. How few Junes
Will heat our pulses quicker! How few frosts
Will chill the hearts that beat."

"That's pretty," said Effie, "very pretty. I like po'try. It seems to say things that—that can't be 'splained any other way. D'you know what I mean, papa?"

"Yes, I know, I know," he answered, dreamily. "It is the voice of Nature, I think—true poetry. But people—some people, who don't know, call *verses* poetry—it's not that—not that."

"We are rested—Bernie an' me, so we're goin' to begin to gather flowers, Effie, and you must come an' help us," cried Jeanie, dancing across the turf to her sister, her pretty little figure irradiated by a stream

of golden sunlight that transformed a simple white frock into a perfect Titania's robe.

"Yes," said Effie, jumping up, "I'll come. And Jeanie, we might have a race, to see which can fill a basket first."

"Timmy's comin' too," the little Baronet said. "An' she can pick flowers *awful* quick. Muvvy, will you come?"

"Oh, no, Bernard," she answered, laughing. "I should be quite out of my element. But I'll tie up your bunches if you like. You won't enjoy that part of the performance, I'm sure."

"No, that's girls' work. I couldn't do that."

Jeanie and Effie laughed at his lofty tone. When he adopted this, his "superior" manner, he amused them exceedingly.

"You're talking like an old gentleman 'stead of a little boy, d'you know, Bernie," said Jeanie, with her usual frankness.

"You—you shouldn't laugh at me!" he exclaimed, with an angry flush dyeing his pretty baby-face. "It's—it's rude. I don't like you any more." Tears rose to his eyes, although he bit his lip hard, in an impatient effort to restrain them. The spoiled child had been taught no self-restraint and he knew nothing of the merry "give and take," that is almost a code of honor in ordinary healthy nursery life.

"I didn't mean to be unkind. I was only in fun," said Jeanie, with wide-opened, wondering blue eyes. "You're not really cross, are you?"

Bernard made no reply, but picking up his basket, joined Effie, who was already busily occupied in gathering flowers. Jeanie had not the sweet and patient

temper of her sister, although she was usually a good-natured child. The little Baronet's ill-humor was infectious, perhaps. At all events, she broke into a provoking laugh, which did not have a soothing effect on the already excited nerves of the younger child. Suddenly he turned and flung his basket at her with all his little force. Then, with a passionate cry, he darted away, and was soon out of sight, hidden by the luxuriant foliage of the trees.

Jeanie was not hurt. Bernard's aim had been a random one, and the basket fell harmlessly upon the grass. The little girl felt crestfallen and ashamed. Bernard had been naughty, she thought, but, then, he was younger than she—quite a little boy—and piqued by his display of temper, she had purposely further irritated him. Jeanie sought out Effie, whom she found among the lovely hyacinths, delicate wild hyacinths, that the children called bluebells. Effie was tying up a delicious fragrant bunch, and singing to herself a happy little song. She was a quiet little contented body, of totally different character to impulsive Jeanie.

"She's much gooder than me," thought Jeanie, with a pang of self-reproach as she stood looking down upon her.

"Effie," she said, abruptly. "I—I said something that Bernie didn't like, an' then he got cross, an' I laughed, so he threw—no, *threw* his basket at me, but it was my fault. Then he ran away. I don't know where he is."

Effie looked up, an anxious little pucker in her smooth forehead. "It's a pity. Where is Bernie, Jeanie? Oh! you don't know. I'll go an' look for

him." She put down her basket and rose from the grass.

"Shall I come, too?"

"P'raps you'd better not—just yet, I mean. I'll bring him back here, if I can."

"Bernie, Bernie," Effie called, running down a grassy glade and looking to right and left. There was no answer, only the birds fluttered above her in the overhanging branches of the trees and the little rabbits frisked away at the sound of the child's light footstep.

"Bernie," cried Effie again. "Bernie! Please answer me. I want to speak to you."

Suddenly she came upon him. He had thrown himself down at the foot of a great tree, and his face was hidden by his hands, but she felt sure that he was crying. He looked such a little boy—young and small, even for his age, that Effie was touched.

"Bernie," she said, stooping down and laying her hand upon his shoulder, "Jeanie wants you to be friends with her again. She's sorry she—she vexed you—an' she's not angry 'cos you threw the basket at her, she's going to forget that. Please come with me, and let's go back to Jeanie and gather flowers for the poor little hospital-children. We want this to be a very happy day, you know," added Effie, "'cos it's papa's birthday, an' he never can enjoy anything if we're not good and happy!"

Bernard sat up and brushed his tears away, choking back a little sob.

"I've been a—a horrid boy," he said, with a catch in his breath. "An' you an' Jeanie will never love me any more. Did I hurt Jeanie, Effie? I do hope

not, most *awful*. But—but—O Effie, at that moment when I throwed the basket, I *wanted* to hurt her, 'cos she—she laughed at me. But I was wicked—dreffly wicked, I know I was."

"Everyone is naughty sometimes," said wise little Effie quietly. "An' you're sorry now, aren't you, Bernie, so we must try to forget it. Jeanie's not angry with you, she quite forgives you? You'll come now an' gather flowers with us, won't you?"

The little boy rose to his feet, and followed her in a very subdued manner to the great patch of wild hyacinth, in the midst of which was Jeanie, her basket half filled with blossoms. She looked up rather anxiously as the other children approached.

Little Sir Bernard walked straight up to her. No one had told him that a true gentleman will always apologize when he is in the wrong, and his proud little heart failed him somewhat for an instant. But an innate generosity of nature, that was the outcome of neither birth nor education, rose to his rescue at that critical moment, and, with a sensitive flush, he spoke.

"Jeanie," he said, "I'm sorry; please forgive me."

"O Bernard," cried the little girl gladly, "of course I will."

She stooped and kissed his wistful little face.

"I will give you all my flowers," he said. "An'—an' muvvy will tie them up for you, I know."

Thus the little cloud blew away as summer clouds will, and the sunshine of happiness reigned supreme once more.

"Jeanie is a good girl," Bernard presently confided to Effie. "She forgived me for tryin' to hurt her

d'reckly I asked her. I shouldn't have forgiven—not for a long, long time.”

“Don't you 'member what we say every day in our prayers, Bernie?”

“'Bout forgivin' people, is it, Effie? I don't know, I think.”

“‘Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us,’” repeated the little girl reverently. “That is what we pray God to do, Bernie. An' God forgives us very very much—oh, so often. So we ought to forgive other people.”

Thus urged Effie among the fragrant wild hyacinth, the sunshine falling upon her sweet earnest face ere-while.

“I—I never *thought* of that before,” said the little boy. “Who told you all these things, Effie?”

“Papa,” the child answered. “He always tells us everything, you know, Bernie, everything we ought to know. He reads it in books, and then he 'splains it to us, so's we can understand.”

“Miss Effie, Miss Effie,” called Annette. “'Tis lunch time, an' if you are coming to help me unpack the picnic baskets, you must come at once.”

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JEANIE.

CHAPTER IX.

LOST.

"If not with you, I know not where she is,
She may have lighted on your fairies here,
And now be skipping in these fairy rings,
And capering hand in hand with Oberon."
—*The Foresters.* LORD TENNYSON.

THE golden sun was low in the beautiful, calm summer heavens, and a soft, westerly breeze, flower-scented, strayed gently over the blue and purple banks of wild hyacinth, and fanned Effie's pretty earnest face as she sat beneath a great oak tree at her father's side, a little apart from the others, and talked with him as she loved to talk of all that interested her most. The happy holiday was nearly over, and it was time to take the homeward road. The children had helped Annette to pack away the cups and saucers, plates and dishes and all the other impedimenta of a

picnic, and now Effie's quick eyes could discern the carriage and horses awaiting them at the base of the hill, where the heavy chalk road commenced, although Dr. Allan, short-sighted even when wearing his accustomed glasses, could see nothing but a little dot of black standing out distinct against the white.

The harvest of bluebells had been no mere dream, and a great hamper, filled to overflowing with delicate, scented, azure-blue blossoms, bore the spoils of the day. The eyes of the little sick town children in a London hospital would be gladdened by a perfect show of flowers, and surely, thought little Effie, the fragrant bluebells must bear a breath of pure, country air into the quiet and shaded wards, so far away from rural sights and sounds, and perchance too an echo—though faint—of that fairy music in which she and Jeanie so profoundly believed.

"I think our flowers may make those poor little ill children happy, papa dear," she said confidentially, slipping her little hand into his. "An' it's nice—pleasanter feeling, isn't it, when we can do a little good—a little something for others—even on a holiday."

"Yes, little one, you're right," and the doctor laid his hand caressingly on the curly head. "A little something for others, if we can do that we shall find in it the secret of happiness."

"Effie, do you know where your sister and Bernard are?" asked Miss Timms, hurrying up. "They are not here. Lady Bentinck fancied they must be with you and the doctor, but——" she looked around her in some dismay.

"I thought they were helping Annette to pack, Miss Timms," Effie suggested.

"So they were, my dear, but they left her some ten minutes ago, she says. She thought they had joined you."

"No, papa an' I were sitting under that tree talking. They didn't come to us," Effie said. "But I s'pose they've run back to gather more flowers. Papa, won't you give your 'coo-ee,' they'd soon hear that."

"Coo-ee—coo-ee!" The cry rang clearly through the woodland shades, distinct and resonant in the stillness of evening. The deeper glades caught up a musical, mocking echo, and the murmur died away in the misty blue shadows afar off. But there was no response.

"Where can the children be?" Lady Bentinck asked with the impatience of fear.

"Don't distress yourself needlessly," said Dr. Allan reassuringly. "I've no doubt that they will be with us immediately." And putting his hand to his mouth he called again loudly and repeatedly.

But still no answer came.

"Oh! they are lost—my boy is lost!" panted Lady Bentinck, her pretty face paling.

"No, no," murmured Miss Timms. "Pray don't think so."

Lady Bentinck appealed to the doctor.

"Do you think they're lost?" she asked tremulously.

"I think they may have wandered from the beaten track, and have become confused, so that they cannot for the moment find it again," he replied. "But I really don't consider we have the least cause for alarm. This is a very quiet and peaceful country spot. A keeper will in all probability soon come across them, and he will bring them back to us at once. These

woods are well preserved, and there are always several keepers about."

"But the day is waning," she said. "And—and it's already growing dusk. Oh! do something to find them, Dr. Allan—pray, pray do something! Let us send to the Police Station and institute an enquiry at once, without loss of time."

"You forget that we are not in London," he responded, repressing a smile. "There is no Police Station nearer than Bumbleton—five miles—and I doubt if the police would prove useful on this occasion. No, we must hunt about well, and call repeatedly, and I trust with the result that the children may soon be discovered."

But hunting and calling proved alike fruitless, and the gathering dusk was a serious impediment to the search. It appeared that the children must have wandered afar, and the doctor's face grew grave, as he beheld the futility of the efforts made to find them.

"I cannot understand Jeanie's conduct," he said, quite sternly, for him, to Effie. "She is old enough to know better than this. I am extremely vexed with her."

"O papa!" said Effie, rather tearfully. "P'raps a gipsy's stolen them away!"

"A gipsy!" repeated Lady Bentinck, clasping her hands. "Oh, my little boy! my little boy! I'll never see him again!" She sank down upon the grass, and broke into hysterical weeping.

Dr. Allan turned away silently. He was unaccustomed to such exhibitions of utter lack of self-control, and he felt unable to reason with Lady Bentinck, whilst his every faculty was bent upon means for dis-

covering the lost children. This was no time, he thought, for tears and repinings. There must rather be action—prompt action—unhampered by selfish prostration and tragic sentiment. He had but little patience to expend on the tears of this distressed and helpless lady, whose very anxiety for her only child was encrusted in selfishness.

"We must search once more," he said to Miss Timms. "Please go to the right with Annette, and I'll take this path to the left. Effie, you may come with me."

"Papa, dear," whispered the child. "I'll stay with Lady Bentinck, if I may."

"Yes, do. You may be able to—to comfort her," he said hastily, and strode away.

Effie sat down beside Lady Bentinck upon the grass, and slipped her little hand into hers.

"Don't cry," she said softly. "Please don't. God is taking care of Jeanie and Bernard. He won't let any harm come to them."

"O Effie; my little boy—my darling! Shall I ever see him again?"

"Yes, yes. I hope so," said Effie earnestly. "Shall I pray God to keep them safe, Lady Bentinck?"

"If you like. If you think there's any good in it?" she answered wildly.

"Any good in it!" echoed Effie wonderingly. "Why, *of course* there's good in it. Shall we pray together? The prayer will be louder then, and p'raps it will fly up quicker to heaven."

"No, I can't pray. I've not prayed since I was a little child like you. And—and, I don't believe that God would hear me."

"But he hears everybody—*everybody*!" cried the little girl eagerly. "Even children!"

Lady Bentinck was silent for a moment, then she began to weep afresh.

"Oh, my boy—my darling!" she wailed out helplessly.

The utter collapse of this dainty, brilliant lady of fashion, at the first breath of adversity, fairly astounded simple little Effie; she was not like most "grown-up people" the child thought, but rather reminded her of Jeanie in one of her "moods." And she looked so beautiful, and so pathetic, that Effie's kind heart was touched.

"But, I'm glad papa's not like this," thought the little girl, with a half smile. "For, if all grown-up people sat down an' cried when things went wrong, I wonder what would happen to the little children. Bernard must want to take care of his mother, 'stead of her taking care of him."

"Lady Bentinck," she said gently. "I will pray—as well as I can—an' then you will say, 'Amen' with me, won't you? An' that will mean that we both mean what I say. I think that'll do."

Effie knelt upon the turf with reverently closed eyes and folded hands.

"Please God," she said, in a low and earnest voice, "take care of Jeanie and little Bernard, and bring them safe back to us, for Jesus' sake. Amen."

"Amen. Please say that with me, Lady Bentinck."

"Amen. Oh, may God answer your prayer, little Effie!"

"I'm sure he will."

"What makes you so sure, child?" asked the lady, brushing away her tears, and looking up at her curiously.

"Something inside my heart, I think—p'raps it's what papa calls *faith*. It's a happy feeling, 'cos it seems to 'splain things that nothing else could 'splain. I don't know how to tell you properly."

At that instant Dr. Allan returned, accompanied by Miss Timms and Annette.

"We can do no more," he said. "We must get back to Bumbleton as fast as we can, and put the case into the hands of the police. Meantime, my man shall remain here, and organize a search party."

He was quiet and collected and business-like, uttering no vain lamentations and regrets. He looked so calm, that some might have fancied he felt no anxiety. But Effie knew differently. There was a white, set look on his face that did not escape her loving observation.

"May I stay with the search party, papa?" she asked.

"No, no," he said hurriedly. "That wouldn't do."

Effie accepted this decision as final. She longed to stay, but she would not for worlds have added to her father's anxiety. She was a good little thing, obedient and patient, and she knew that children may often help most by being silent and submissive when important business occupies their elders.

It was a very sad little picnic-party that returned to Bumbleton, driving silently through the dusky lanes in the twilight. Lady Bentinck was tremulous and tearful, Miss Timms in a fever of nervous excitement, and the doctor grave and uncommunicative.

Annette tried to whisper comfort to Effie, but the child, impressed by the serious faces of the older people about her, looked pale and big-eyed. It was a relief to all, when the lights of Bumbleton glimmered out in the misty valley, and Bluebell and Firefly swung down the steep station hill at good speed, the brake crushing noisily over freshly laid stones.

Much later in the evening, when Effie was in bed, her father came up to see her. He had but just come in, and he was about to start for Graffham again, with a search detachment from the Police Station. He tried to reassure his little girl, and to comfort her, and Effie endeavored to reap hope from his words. Then he went away, and presently, the child, wearied from anxiety and dread, fell asleep, as children will, and found rest from her trouble.

But there was to be no sleep for Dr. Allan that night. He must search, high and low, for the lost little ones. A horrible fear haunted him—a fear that he dared not confide to Lady Bentinck, and her apprehensive companion, to little Effie, or to kindly, devoted Annette. There was, on that hill side, a pond—deep and dangerous—known to the country folk as the Black Pool. The poor doctor's horrible fear was that his little girl and her small companion might have fallen into this piece of water.

"The pond must be dragged," he said to the Police superintendent, with white lips and a voice that faltered, despite his best efforts to steady it. "And at once. It is useless to resume the search, until this has been accomplished."

All through that short summer's night, bright lanterns flashed through the darkness of deep, grassy

glades, and tangled woodland ways, and men's voices startled the drowsy birds, which doubtless marvelled at this unusual human invasion.

"Coo-ee, coo-ee!" The cry re-echoed a thousand times, and was thrown back, by a mocking echo. But no childish voice was raised in welcome reply.

CHAPTER X.

WHERE ARE THE FAIRIES?

"The Now is an atom of sand,
And the Near is a perishing clod,
But Afar is as Faëry Land,
And Beyond is the bosom of God."

—LORD LYTTON.

FAR away in the heart of those deep pine woods, that clothe the South Downs with their everlasting green, stood, hand in hand, two little children. The shadows of night lay upon smooth sward, and sequestered way, the birds' sweet song was hushed, and the fragrant blue hyacinths drooped their wearied heads. Day was done, and drowsy nature sank to repose.

Darkness was descending swiftly, surely. The woods, bereft of sunshine, wore an "eerie" look! Weird and unexplainable sounds broke the great stillness. The children crept closer to each other, and their little faces grew pale and half-frightened.

"Jeanie," whispered Bernard tremulously, "we shouldn't have come. It was my fault. I wanted to find the fairies' home, an'—an' I 'suaded you. I'm afraid we was very naughty, to slip away without telling muvvy, or anyone, an' now—now we're just losted—quite losted, an' that's a punishment for our naughtiness." The little fellow turned away, to hide the tears that would rise to his eyes.

"I'm the wrongest, Bernie, 'tis my fault most," said

Jeanie, in her quick, impetuous way. "I'm bigger than you, ten years old, an' you're only seven. But—but we must try not to be frightened. It was silly to come, to look for the fairies," she added, "for I don't believe they live in England at all now. I 'spect they've flown away, 'cos people are so unkind, and don't believe in them. They're offended. That's it."

"But we b'lieve in them, so they might come an' seen us," agreed the little Baronet plaintively. "I—I think they're very unkind, very unkind and proud."

"Hush! oh, hush!" Jeanie cried, looking about her swiftly, and half fearfully. "They're all about us now I daresay, in the trees, an' the flowers, an' the long grass, though we can't see them. An' you might offend them, Bernie. You'd not like to do that?"

"No," he answered thoughtfully, "I love them too much."

"Let us sit down under this tree. I'm tired, aren't you?" said Jeanie. "I'm sure we've walked miles an' miles, an' yet we've never got back to that spot, where we had our picnic. An' we've shouted, Bernie, haven't we?—shouted till our throats were quite sore, an' no one seemed to hear."

"Of course not," Bernard said resignedly, "we're lost. I 'spect we'll never see muvvy, an' Dr. Allan, an' Effie, and dear Timmy, and all the others, any more. Bears and tigers will come by-an'-by, an' eat us right up, an'—an' we'll never be heard of again!"

The little boy's fortitude gave way utterly before this gruesome picture of his excited imagination, and he fell upon his face on the smooth turf, and sobbed woefully.

Jeanie did not cry. She sat upright, her hands clasped round her knees, staring dismally in front of her. She felt too unhappy, and too hopeless, herself to attempt to comfort her little companion.

Presently Bernard's weeping ceased, and he sat up and looked at her.

"D'you think me a drefful baby?" he asked.

"No, 'cos you're so little," said Jeanie.

"I don't like the idea of bein' eaten by bears an' tigers," he explained.

"There aren't any bears and tigers in England now, 'cept in the Zoological Gardens, you silly boy!"

Bernard thought she might have told him so before, but he felt too that this was not a moment for small squabbings, and he was too tired and depressed to experience resentment. As for Jeanie her weariness expressed itself in a form of impatient crossness, not an unusual ebullition with children of highly-nervous organization. She sat in silence, biting her lips and staring in front of her vaguely and almost sullenly.

Presently Bernard spoke again.

"D'you think we'll ever be found?" he asked, rather falteringly. "Oh, do you, Jeanie?"

"I don't 'spect so," she said. "I b'lieve we're lost entirely, like the Babes in the Wood, you know. I 'spose presently we'll die of hunger like they did, an' then little fairy robins will come and cover us over with leaves." Her tone grew tragic and her eyes filled with ready tears.

"It's all my fault!" cried the little boy, a sob in his throat. "I ought never to have asked you to come an' look for those fairies. It was naughty of me."

"Yes, an' I was wrong too—quite as wrong. We shouldn't have stolen away without telling papa or anyone; it was very much the same as disobedient, I think."

After that there was silence, and presently, when the shadowed woods had grown very dark, Bernard's curly head sank back upon the dewy grass, and he fell asleep. He was only a very little boy, and his trouble had tired him out.

Jeanie looked down upon his unconscious baby face compassionately.

"He's ever so much littler than me," thought the child. "An' papa says he's delicate an' frag—oh, what's that word? Ah! fragile."

She put her hand upon the grass. It was damp with the dews of evening. Very carefully she moved the little sleeper until his head and shoulders rested upon her frock, it was only a thin summer frock of white cotton, but it might serve as some slight protection she hoped.

Jeanie was not at all sleepy. Anxiety and dread kept her wide-awake, and she sat upright, listening with bated breath to every sound, the hundred and one strange weird noises that are to be heard in a forest at night striking sharply on her attentive ear. The little girl was not happy, for she felt that she had done wrong in stealing away without permission on a wild quest that she knew full well her father would not have sanctioned. Her conscience reproached her, and her little heart grew heavy within her as she sat there thinking in that dark and solitary place.

"I've been naughty," thought the child in her simple fashion. "An' now God is angry with me. I

feel it." Her head sank upon her breast, and she cried softly and silently.

Presently she looked up, the tears shining on her little face, the light of faith—a child's unquestioning faith in her eyes.

"Dear God," she prayed aloud, "please forgive me, an' take care of Bernie an' me, and help papa to find us, for Jesus' sake. Amen."

Then, a wonderful sense of rest and of protection stealing into her heart, a sense that was very *real*, she leaned her head against the tree trunk, and so in a few moments fell asleep.

The sleep of childhood is sweet and sound, and Jeanie and Bernard, alone in the dim depths of the woodlands, two poor, small, lost children, rested as tranquilly as though they had been snugly tucked up in their own cots at home.

It was morning when Bernard awoke, a bright, delicious summer's morn. The leaves, green and fresh, of the trees sparkled with dew as though some fairy hand had decked them with a myriad tiny diamonds, and formed a most delicate flagree against the clear blue sky. The birds were singing, singing, singing as though they could never sing enough, it seemed that theirs was a nature of pure, spontaneous praise and joy. A tiny stream of rippling water danced over its bed of pebbles between great tufts of overhanging bracken, and added its pleasant music to that of the winged songsters, fluttering in the branches above. It was a most beautiful scene.

The little Baronet sat up on the grass, and rubbed his eyes.

"Am I dreamin'?" he said aloud. "Or have the

fairies taken me away to their home? How is it that I'm not in my own little room?"

Then he remembered all that had happened, and also that he was very hungry. He had had no supper, and now he saw no prospect of breakfast. He awoke Jeanie somewhat ruthlessly from her slumbers, and as the little girl sat up, dazed by her strange surroundings and only half awake, he asked plaintively:

"Where is our breakfast comin' from?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Jeanie. "But," she added very decidedly, "we can say our morning prayers and wash our hands and faces in the stream before we think of that."

"I'm hungry," said the little Baronet, who was unused to hardships.

"So am I," retorted Jeanie, rather sharply.

Bernard sighed and said no more. Jeanie's quick tongue and decided manner were not without effect upon him. Jeanie made no allowances for the spoiled child, who was accustomed to having his every whim indulged, and her cool indifference to his varying moods exercised a most salutary effect upon his wilful little mind.

So Bernard very meekly followed out his little companion's concise instructions, and when the children had, kneeling upon the grass, repeated their morning prayers, they bathed their faces and hands in the cool, pleasant waters of the bubbling stream, and felt greatly refreshed by these ablutions.

"Don't you think we might take off our shoes and stockings and wade in the water? That would be fun," suggested Bernard.

But Jeanie shook her head.

"You'd get a cold," she said. "No, Bernie, we'll go now an' look for a way out of the wood, an' when we're out of the wood p'raps we'll find a cottage an' get some breakfast."

"I'm *awf'ly* hungry, aren't you, Jeanie?"

"Pretty well," she answered, with a courageous attempt at cheerfulness.

Hand in hand the two children trotted down the long green walks of the wood, up one walk and down another, their little feet falling softly upon the smooth and dewy turf so softly that the rabbits scarcely scuttled away at their approach, and the birds overhead sang on as though they knew that they had nothing to fear from these small, earnest-faced mortals, with their wistful and half-timid looks.

So they plodded on through the delicious freshness of early morn, till the sun was high in the summer heavens, and the burden and heat of the day bowed the dainty heads of the fragrant hyacinths. It was very hot, and even the shade of the woods seemed oppressive. Bernard's little face grew pale, and his feet stumbled; several times he would have fallen to the ground but for Jeanie's helping hand. The children were silent, and their throats were parched from heat, and hunger, and thirst. Jeanie was a sturdy, healthy little girl, but her damp bed upon the dewy grass had made her bones ache, and she was unaccustomed to exposure to heat. They were a truly deplorable little couple.

Suddenly Jeanie spoke.

"Look, look, Bernie!" she said eagerly, "we are coming to the edge of the wood. I see a common, and fields, and hills, and—and, far away, a little cottage."

The delicate child at her side did not answer, and, as they emerged from the shadows of the trees on to a large gorse common, he suddenly fell fainting upon the grass.

Jeanie had never seen any one faint before, and when she knelt by Bernard's side and gazed in terror upon his pale, unconscious little face, she thought that he was dead. The horrified little girl burst into a passion of weeping. Her sobs and cries rent the sultry stillness of the summer noon.

"Stop that row," exclaimed a harsh voice, and a rough hand pushed Jeanie imperiously away. A dark, swarthy young woman, arrayed in cheap and dirty finery, and further adorned with sham jewellery, such as children find in Christmas crackers and store away as decorations for their dolls, bent over the still form of the little Baronet, and looked narrowly into his colorless face.

"He's not dead," she said shortly. "Hi, Jake!" she shouted, turning about. "Bring that pannikin of water here, and look sharp about it."

Jeanie turned, too, and saw, what she had not noticed before, a traveling caravan drawn up a few yards away from the margin of the wood. Two horses were tethered near it. By the steps of the caravan burned a rough fire of broken underwood, about which was gathered a small group of persons and dogs.

A little boy ran up with the pan of water that the woman had shouted for. He was ragged and dirty, and his hair was as tangled as a woollen mat. Staring at Jeanie with round black eyes he exclaimed:

"Oh, my! ain't she a swell!"

"You shut up, Jake," said the woman, scowling at

him. She dashed some water in the little Baronet's pale face, and presently he revived and opened his eyes.

"Where's Jeanie?" he cried anxiously, as his first conscious gaze rested upon the strange, swarthy face of the gipsy woman. "I don't know you. Please go away," he added imperiously.

"I'm here, Bernie darling, I'm here with you," cried Jeanie, hastening to his side. "Are you better now?"

"I'm quite well, I think," the little boy said, sitting up, but he looked so white and ill that Jeanie's heart sank within her.

"Please, are we anywhere near Bumbleton?" she rather timidly asked the gipsy woman.

"Never heard of such a place," was the not very reassuring reply. "What do you want to know for, eh?"

"We live there. I wish to get back there as soon as possible. Papa will be so anxious about us. We're lost."

"Lost, are you?" said the gipsy woman, with a harsh laugh, "and how did yer lose yerselves?"

"We—we came to look for the fairies," faltered Jeanie. "We stole—stole away without telling anyone, and——" A sob rose in her throat, and she could say no more.

"You're afraid you'll get the stick when you goes home, eh?"

"The stick?" repeated the bewildered child.

"A beatin', you silly. Can't you understand plain English? Well, come along o' me, an' I'll give you both a bit o' breakfast."

She caught the little Baronet up in her strong arms

as though he had been a baby, and strode across the grass, Jeanie following her, to where the knot of people and dogs was gathered about the smoky, green wood fire.

"Hullo, Jess, an' what have you got there?" cried a very ugly old woman, who, to Jeanie's amazement, was smoking a pipe.

Jess answered in some language that was foreign to Jeanie, and as she spoke the faces of her listeners grew interested and excited. The old woman took her pipe from her mouth, and pointed with it to the door of the caravan, and one of the men rose to his feet and began to harness the horses. Then Jake bustled about collecting pots and pans and storing them away into the cart, another lad threw water upon the fire to extinguish it, the dogs—curious shaggy specimens of dogs they were—got up and shook themselves, and there was every sign of an impending departure.

"Come on," said Jess. She mounted the steps of the caravan, still bearing Bernard in her arms, and Jeanie followed her reluctantly. The interior of the caravan was dirty and close. There was a prevailing odor of stale tobacco smoke, and every corner was heaped up with crockery, tins and ragged clothes. On the floor was a shabby mattress. The gipsy woman laid the little Baronet down upon it, and threw a blanket over him. He had fallen into the deep sleep of exhaustion, and knew nothing of his strange surroundings.

"If you please," Jeanie said timidly, "why have we come in here?"

"To get some breakfast," shortly answered the gipsy woman. "Sit down there and 'bide quiet, while

I fetch you some." She went away, but quickly returned with a bowl of water and a hunch of bread, which she put into Jeanie's hands. Then, while the child was hungrily partaking of this very plain fare, Jess bent over the mattress, and put a bottle of cordial to the little Baronet's pale lips.

"He'll do now," she said, turning to Jeanie. "Let him be, and after this sleep he'll wake up as well as he ever was. And if you are a sensible girl, you'll go to sleep too."

"But we must be going home. Papa will be so anxious about us," faltered the little girl.

"Well, you shall drive there in my carriage and pair, anyway," said the gipsy woman, with a harsh laugh.

"Oh, thank you!" cried Jeanie, gratefully. "It's so kind of you."

"Don't mention it, my dear," returned the gipsy woman, laughing still. "It's all in the way of business."

Then she went away, closing the door behind her. Jeanie sat down beside Bernard—an anxious look on her pretty little face. She did not feel very sure of these gipsy folk, into whose hands she had fallen. Besides, Bernard looked so ill, the poor little fellow. Jeanie's eyes filled with tears.

The gipsies outside were chattering in a tongue strange to her ears, and bustling about busily. Presently the caravan began to move, rumbling slowly and heavily over the uneven turf of the common. Jeanie uttered a sigh of relief. They had now started for Bumbleton, she thought. Oh, what joy it would be to see papa and Effie once more, to hear dear old Chum's

bark of welcome, and even to be scolded by Miss Brady and Annette. Jeanie had never realized before how dear her home was, and how many happinesses and blessings filled up her daily life.

"I'll be ever so good when I get back. I'll never grumble, nor be cross an' naughty any more," she thought.

Jeanie was tired, and the monotonous jolting of the heavy caravan was soothing. So presently the little girl fell asleep upon the rough wooden floor, by the side of the mattress on which Bernard lay, her curly head resting upon the blanket.

It seemed to Jeanie that she slept for a long, long time, and perhaps she did, for the dusk of evening was closing in when she awoke.

The caravan was stationary, and the two children were still alone. Outside, there seemed to be a perfect Babel of sound. Hand-organs, concertinas, penny whistles and squeaking fiddles vied with each other in noise and discord. A loud drum boomed out above all. Hurrying feet passed the caravan, and people called and shouted to each other. Shrill laughter fell harshly upon the ears of the shivering child, and every now and then some louder yell caused her to crouch down, terrified, by the side of her unconscious little companion.

Suddenly Bernard awoke.

"Oh, what is it!—what is it?" he cried, starting up on his mattress.

"I don't know!" said Jeanie, tremulously. "I can't think!"

"Where's the gipsy woman?"

As though in answer to his question, the door was

flung open, and the person he spoke of entered the caravan.

"Please is something wrong?" faltered Jeanie, who could not help a feeling of fear, when the sharp and glittering black eyes of the gipsy rested upon her.

"Something wrong?" Jess laughed harshly. "What d' yer mean?"

Bernard had recovered his equilibrium. Though highly sensitive, he was not a timid child. He was more accustomed to strangers than was simple, country-bred Jeanie.

"What is all that noise?" he asked, "music an' things?"

"It's a Fair—a village Fair, my pretty little dear," answered the woman. "Didn't you never hear o' such a thing as that—eh?"

"Are there merry-go-rounds, an' shooting galleries?" asked the little boy eagerly.

"Right you are, and sweeties, an' ginger-cracks, an' all sorts o' good things. Would you like to come along o' me an' see it all?"

"Thank you," said the little Baronet politely. "But my head aches rather, an' I want to see my mother first. My mother will be wonderin' where I am."

"Bless your sweet heart, for a bonny little chap!" cried the gipsy, kissing him.

Just then the door of the caravan was opened, and the old woman who had smoked a pipe came in hurriedly.

"Look sharp!" she said to Jess. "Those bobbies will be round before we've half done our work. Here, you take the boy, an' I'll look after this 'un."

The old creature, with these words, turned to Jeanie, and telling her to stand still, or she would get into trouble, pulled off her fresh and pretty little garments, substituted for them some dirty and ragged clothes, the mere contact with which made the poor child shudder.

"Now take off your shoes an' stockings," said the ancient gipsy. "They're far too fine for a caravan child—and that's what you be now."

Jeanie, trembling with mingled anger and fear, was obliged to obey.

"Why do you take away our clothes? You are thieves!" cried the little Baronet, struggling in the strong grasp of Jess.

"You'd best bide quiet," she said. "If you don't, I'll have to fetch my man to you, an' my man has a powerful big stick."

"I won't have my clothes taken. I tell you I won't have it!" shouted the little boy. "I'll have you put into prison."

"None o' your antics," cried the older gipsy woman. She strode forward, and Bernard, overcome by numbers, was forced to submit.

Having effected this change of attire, the gipsy women made the children's pretty clothes into a bundle and prepared to depart.

"You may go to sleep now," said Jess, turning to Jeanie. "An' you'd best do so, an' keep quiet. If you makes a sound, I'll let the circus lion in on you—he's residin' convenient like next door, an' he'll eat you up, bones an' all."

"Aren't we to go home?" asked the little Baronet. "Mayn't we go now you've got our clothes?"

"No, you're goin' to stop here an' be my boy, so you'd best make up your mind to it."

"I shan't stop here," said the little fellow boldly. "I *won't*. My mother wants me, an' I shall go to her."

"Not a bit of it," returned the gipsy. "Shan't! Won't! Shall! Very fine talkin' indeed, but only talkin'!"

She followed the older woman out of the caravan, and locked the door behind them. The children were prisoners.



EFFIE AND CHUM.

CHAPTER XI.

JAKE, A GIPSY BOY.

"A ragged, untaught gipsy child,
Rough-voiced, and ignorant, and wild,
No home he knows, no loving care,
Hard burdens his young shoulders bear.

* * * *

For such, show pity, child of wealth,
Nor pass him by engrossed in self,
Your little brother is this boy,
Oh, share with him your gifts with joy."

—*Nursery Ballads.*

LITTLE Sir Bernard ran to the door and shook the handle, so that it rattled noisily in his hand.

"Let us out, let us out!" he shouted. "Let us out, you naughty peoples!"

He kicked vigorously at the panels with little bare feet, that Jess had robbed of shoes and stockings.

But these were futile efforts, and soon he sank back wearied and breathless.

Jeanie was sitting upon the floor crying.

"We shall never get out, never," she sobbed. "An' presently this horrid cart will go on, far away from papa, an' home, an'—an' everything, an' we shall have to be gipsy children, and wear dirty, ragged clothes for always. Oh! I think it's just *drefful*!"

"Don't cry, Jeanie," said Bernard, trying to look hopeful and brave, and not succeeding very well, poor little boy. "Don't cry, dear Jeanie. They will come an' look for us, my mother an' Doctor Allan will, I'm sure o' that. They will come soon, very soon."

"But O Bernie," cried Jeanie. "They'll not know us! Look at our clothes, so ragged an' so dirty. They'll think we're just little gipsy children."

"I 'spect my mother would know me anyhow," the little Baronet said wisely. "Mothers always knows their children. Clothes don't sig'fy. See how the sheeps know their little lambs that are all dressed 'like in white woolly coats."

Jeanie actually laughed.

"What a funny boy you are!" she said. "You say such queer things."

"They are only the thinks that come into my head," he responded gravely. "I have a great many thinks, don't you, Jeanie? Grave thinks, an' happy thinks, an' nice, amusin' thinks. They all come crowdin' one after the other, like dreams, only plainer."

Jeanie nodded.

"I know. But sometimes Miss Brady says to me, when she's not pleased with me, an' that's rather often," added the little girl, with a sigh, 'How thoughtless you are!' But I'm not thoughtless really, I don't think any little children are, their heads are full of thinks, only grown people don't know about it."

They were sitting on the floor talking, and the light was fading so fast that the interior of the gipsies' caravan was growing dusky, and soon it must be quite dark.

"Night is coming, I think," Jeanie said; "but I'm not sleepy; are you, Bernie?"

Bernard shook his curly head.

"But I'm hungry, an' I wish we were safe at home. If that little window up there wasn't so high an' so tiny, we might get out of it an' run away, Jeanie. Oh! I do wish we could get away."

"Annette says 'if wishes were horses beggars would ride,'" Jeanie informed him, by way of consolation.

She had scarcely spoken when the door was opened slowly and cautiously, and a mischievous boy's face, surmounted by a mop of curly, unkempt hair, was poked into the caravan.

"Yoicks! Here we are again! How d'y'e like the fun?" cried a shrill, laughing voice.

"What fun?" Jeanie asked gravely.

"We don't like it at all, thank you," said the little Baronet, very decidedly.

The caravan door was opened somewhat wider, and the ragged boy, whom Jess had addressed as Jake, scrambled in, and, closing it behind him, sat down on the floor, opposite the children.

the general sense of his remarks, and they did not find those remarks cheering.

"The door is open," Jeanie said, with a wistful glance at it. "You won't stop us if we get out an' go away, will you, little boy?"

"That I shall, an' right away," he answered promptly. "Why, if I let yer go, I'd be beat black an' blue by'n-by; Jess'd 'alf kill me she would, an' I guess I ain't goin' to be 'alf killed fur two little goslings like you wot have flown into a trap wid yer eyes open."

"If I was as big as you, I'd fight you so you'd have to let us go," said Bernard, flushing angrily.

Jake was a sturdy lad of ten or eleven, strong and wiry as a wild rabbit. He looked down upon the slender little figure of the seven-year-old baronet with a wide grin that was half-amused, half contemptuous.

"Why, I could wallop half-a-dozen o' sich as you into smithereens if I wanted to, an' do it wid one 'and too," he said complacently.

Bernard's dark eyes flashed. This spoiled child was no coward.

"That's not true," he cried indignantly. "I'm not afraid of you. I'll fight you now."

"No, no, Bernie," interrupted Jeanie hastily, and caught the little baronet's hands in hers, and held them fast.

"Never you fear," said the gipsy boy reassuringly. "I wouldn't fight wid a bit o' a shaver like 'im. I'll wait till I finds un o' my own size."

"That is very nice of you," exclaimed Jeanie, much impressed. "You must be an honorable boy."

"Where's your fine clothes gone—eh?" he enquired. "Why, you looks now for all the world like two gipsy kids! Ha, ha!" and he laughed immoderately.

"What are kids?" asked Bernard, who was possessed of a great thirst after knowledge.

"What are kids?" echoed the gipsy boy. "He, he! 'What are kids?' sez the little innercent. Well. I never!"

"I know what kids are," Jeanie said with dignity. "Baby goats, of course; an' you needn't laugh like that, little boy. It's rude."

But the little boy only laughed the more, gasping out between his bursts of merriment, "You must please ter excuse my drorin'-room manners, which I've let 'em out for a holiday."

Presently, when he had somewhat recovered from his violent ebullitions of mirth, he enquired again as to the fate of the children's dainty garments.

"Those naughty peoples took them," said the little baronet. "Jess, an'—an' another lady. I don't like those ladies at all. They're not nice. I wish we'd never, never seen them," he concluded vigorously.

"An' well you may, younker," responded the gipsy boy. "An' a fine old time it is as you'll put in wi' they beatins and kickins, there's a many in store for you both; bits an' scraps for food, and little enough o' that. I know what it's like, for I've been at it sin' I were a babby, an' Jess, she's my aunt she is, an' a right jolly aunt fer a boy to have. I say, you young shavers wuz green—precious green, to be lured into this trap!"

Jeanie and Bernard could not understand much of the gipsy boy's rough lingo, but they comprehended

the general sense of his remarks, and they did not find those remarks cheering.

"The door is open," Jeanie said, with a wistful glance at it. "You won't stop us if we get out an' go away, will you, little boy?"

"That I shall, an' right away," he answered promptly. "Why, if I let yer go, I'd be beat black an' blue by'n-by; Jess'd 'alf kill me she would, an' I guess I ain't goin' to be 'alf killed fur two little goslings like you wot have flown into a trap wid yer eyes open."

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"That is very nice of you," exclaimed Jeanie, much impressed. "You must be an honorable boy."

Jake grinned. "I'm goin' out ter see the shows now," he said. "I say, you two, will yer promise me faithful, that yer'll keep wid me an' not try no games at runnin' away an' givin' me the slip, if I takes yer along? Now, will yer?"

"We will promise," Jeanie and Bernard said together, and Jeanie added curiously, "What are the shows, please? Somethin' amusin'?"

"You come along an' see," said Jake. "An' it's a fine lot o' sights as may be seen at this here fair, such a lot you couldn't set your eyes on nowhere else. My eye! how you'll sit up! 'Twill make yer hair curl, my little dears."

Jake was a vulgar boy, and very familiar and unceremonious, but the children thought him amusing, and were not inclined to quarrel with one who seemed to represent their only friend. The variety suggested by his offer to take them to see the "shows," was not one to be despised. Jeanie and Bernard had no idea of what the "shows" might be, but they were quite ready to set forth and find out. They were thoroughly wearied of captivity in the close atmosphere of the caravan.

"I has yer faithful promises?" questioned Jake.

"Yes, yes," said Jeanie.

"Now, let us go, this very moment," cried the little Baronet, in his imperative way.

"Right ye are. But, in case o' accidents, I'll have a 'and of each o' yer."

Jeanie gave the gipsy boy a reproachful glance.

"We don't break our promises."

"I'm not sayin' that yer do. But there's a mighty crush outside, and I might miss yer in the crowd, an'

then where'd I be? No, thank yer. Come, little uns give me yer fists an' we'll start at wunst."

"I don't want to be led like a baby," the little Baronet objected.

"Then yer may just stop in 'ere by yersel', while we goes," said Jake. "I don't keer. It don't make any sorter difference to me."

"No, I'll come," cried Bernard quickly. He had no desire to be left alone in the half-dark caravan, while Jeanie was taken to see the wonderful shows of which Jake spoke so mysteriously. "I'll take your hand, an' I can't help it if peoples do think me a baby," he added, pursing up his rosebud of a mouth somewhat pettishly.

Jake laughed.

"They won't take the trouble to think nothin' at all about a ragged little shaver like you, I guess," he remarked, with more candor than politeness.

The little Baronet had never been addressed as "a ragged little shaver" before, and his face flushed sensitively. But he did not flash out angrily upon Jake. He was learning gradually the very difficult lesson of self-control. Children, and grown folk too, can master no harder task, but once overcome it will stand each and all in good stead.

Jake took the children's hands, and bade Bernard open the door, and then the three children descended a rough flight of wooden steps from the caravan to the ground.

Such a brilliant scene met the wondering eyes of Jeanie and Bernard! A crowd of tents and caravans and booths, a sea of eager, excited faces, waving flags, flaring jets of gas, gaily painted advertisements,

merry-go-rounds, swing boats, shooting galleries. And the noise! Well, it was composed of barrel organs, scraping fiddles, and penny whistles, with a loud hum of raised voices above which rose the twangy tones of the Punch and Judy show man, and the shrill treble of a boy, who rang a large bell at intervals, and having thus attracted attention to himself, rapidly announced that the show was just about to begin, and ladies and gentlemen were invited to walk up at once and see the wonderful two-headed goat, that could dance the Highland fling better than any son of the North.

"Didn't you never see a fair before?" Jake asked, in surprise as he listened to the wondering exclamations of his little companions. "Well, I never! you *are* jolly green."

"Where are the shows?" Bernard asked, disregarding this doubtful compliment.

"They're all around in these here tents an' vans," answered the gipsy boy; "come on now and we'll go an' get a sight o' the fat woman, 'fore the tent's too squash full for us to git standin' room. She's a pop'lar sight she is, an' does a roaring trade."

He shouldered his way through the crowd, keeping the children in tow, and after a good deal of bumping and jostling, they found themselves at the entrance of a large tent, into which people were rapidly thronging. A boy stood at this entrance, and shouted in stentorian tones:

"This way to see the fat woman! This way to see the fat woman! Walk up! walk up! Only one penny each. The finest sight in the fair."

He was jingling a tin can into which those who

aspired to see the show threw their pennies, but Jake proffered no entrance fee, and the boy giving him a smile and a nod, let him pass by with his little companions.

"Him an' me's old friends," Jake explained, "an' it's all free 'mong the trade."

The fat woman sat on a small raised platform set in the centre of the tent, and her visitors walked round and stared their amazement and admiration. She was *very* fat, "fatter than Farmer Brown's prize pig," Jeanie whispered to Bernard. So fat that great rolls of flesh rested on the neck-band of her dress, and bulged out against her cuffs. She smiled complacently upon the audience, and seemed in no wise perturbed by their loudly spoken remarks.

"Whaat do yer feed her on—eh?" a rustic asked of a burly personage, who seemed to be the proprietor of the show.

"Salad ile an' park sausages to be sure, every half hour," was the unhesitating reply.

"The old hypocrite," muttered Jake, "why she's kep' on sawdust, swallows it by the sackful."

"I don't think I like this show much," said the little Baronet, with a shuddering glance at the awful proportions of the fat woman. "Let's go an' see somethin' else."

"Well, you *are* 'ard to please," cried Jake astonished. "Howsomever we may as well go an' have a peep at the dancin' dolls. They're rattlin' good, they are."

The dancing dolls sounded interesting, Jeanie thought, but Bernard murmured that dolls were girlish things and not intended for the entertainment of boys.

"Nonsense," said Jake sharply, "you don't know wot you're a talkin' of. This here's like a Punch an' Judy show, only better."

The dancing dolls performed in a small caravan that was dimly lighted by an oil lamp and smelt dreadfully of paraffin. The dolls were very shabby, and some of them looked as though they had lately returned from battle, for broken heads and limbs were the order of the day and there was scarcely one whole puppet among them. They acted a highly sensational play, which the showman called *Mary Queen of Scots*, and there was an execution at the end which highly delighted the small audience, but Jeanie felt that the unhappy Queen would have appeared more interesting if she had not lost one eye, half her nose and a good part of her wig, and she whispered to Bernard that the executioner's axe was made of cardboard covered with silver paper, and that the silver was beginning to peel off.

When the play was over, the spectators crowded out, and Jake, who appeared to possess a free ticket to every show, took the children to see a troupe of performing dogs, whose creditable performance proved more interesting than that of the puppets.

But the dogs made Jeanie think of Chum at home—dear Chummy whom perhaps she might never see again—and then she thought of papa and Effie and her eyes filled with ready tears.

"It's gettin' late," said Jake. "We must git on back to the van. Hullo! here's this little one asleep," and he shook Bernard's shoulders not unkindly.

The little Baronet stumbled to his feet, half dazed by the noise, the strange sights and the flaring lights.

He looked white and tired, and so childish and fragile, that Jeanie's heart ached for him, and just for a little while she forgot her own troubles.

"Bernard's tired," she said, turning to Jake. "He's only little, an' he's not very strong; 'sides we've walked so far in the wood this morning before we met you."

The gipsy boy was rough, but not ill-natured.

"Well, I'll tell you what, younkers," he exclaimed, "I've got a halfpenny here, an' I'll just spend it on some gingerbread an' we'll share it atween us. 'Tis wonderful nervin' stuff is gingerbread. Come on, 'ere you are."

They approached the stall of a little old woman who appeared to be doing a thriving trade in highly colored sweets and cakes, and Jake spent his half-penny much to his own satisfaction, if not to that of his less easily pleased little companions. Jeanie and Bernard found that gingerbread hard to swallow, for it was sticky and solid, and by no means agreeable to the taste, but Jake seemed so certain that it would give them pleasure that they did not like to undeceive him. Jeanie ate hers determinedly and said with equal determination that it was very nice. Bernard managed to smuggle his to a hungry dog that was watching him with wistful eyes.

"Mussy on us, young shaver!" cried Jake, "you must a' swallowed your cake 'ole. Well, I never see a chap eat at such a rate."

"I—I suppose I was hungry," Bernard faltered somewhat confusedly.

"Well, come on now, both of you, and we'll go an' see the chap wot lives on red-hot pokers. He's a foine sight he is. That's his van over there. He resides

along o' his talented family, an' a rare an' clever fam'ly 'tis. His mother 'ave tuk up the fortun'-tellin' line an' drives a rattlin' trade, an' his father takes photographs. 'Yer likeness for the low sum o' sixpence, framed and glazed,' that's his sort. Then his sister's a risin' star on the stage—ballet dancing, that's her line—an' his youngest brother is a tumbler, a hacrobat, that's wot 'e calls 'isself. Oh, they're a talented fam'ly, but not one of 'em comes up to Bill wot swallows the red-hot pokers. He's A, 1, he is," concluded Jake admiringly.

"Don't they burn him? Doesn't it hurt?" Jeanie asked, with a little shiver.

"Hurt? Why bless yer, no. He's made o' iron he is, an' don't feel at all—an iron constitootion 'es got."

"Doesn't he feel anything? Wouldn't he feel it if you stuck a pin into him?" asked the little girl, greatly interested.

"Pins won't run into iron," said Jake scornfully. "Wot next! Come on up now, 'ere we are."

A good many people were crowding into the caravan, wherein, for the benefit of an eager audience, the talented Bill, of iron constitution, was wont to swallow red-hot pokers. Jake pushed his way to a bench and secured seats for himself and the children. The caravan was very hot and was dimly lighted by flaring oil lamps that smelt horribly. It was quite a small caravan and every available space was crowded. At the further end was hung an old curtain, that must once have been blue. In front of it stood a turned down cask or barrel, upon which was seated a small boy with a flute. When the van was so crammed that not another person could have found standing room in it, someone shut the doors, and the boy on the cask

raised his flute to his lips and played some shrill and ear-piercing notes. Instantly, the curtain that had once been blue was brushed back, and a little wizened man, attired in grotesque garments of scarlet cotton, and looking like the ghost of Mephistopheles, sprang out, a red-hot poker brandished in his right hand.

"There 'e is," whispered Jake eagerly to the children. "There's Bill. Now ain't he foine, eh?"

"He looks very old," Jeanie said, "I don't think I ever saw anyone who looked so old."

"He's two 'undred an' fifty years o' age, an' he's lived on red-'ot pokers all that time," Jake told her gravely.

"Oh! poor thing," cried Jeanie appalled.

"It's drefful," said Bernard. "If I was the Queen, I'd make a law that peoples wasn't to eat red-hot pokers any more."

"Then it's a good thing for trade, as yer ain't the Queen," remarked Jake, philosophically.

"Look! look! Bernie," cried Jeanie. "He's beginning! See! He's going to swallow the poker now. Oh!" and she shrank back, appalled by the alarming spectacle.

The gentleman who made a trade of swallowing pokers raised his instrument above his head, and chanted in slow and impressive tones:

"On pokers I live,
Nor do I complain,
When I've eaten 'em all
I'll begin again."

Then opening his mouth very wide, he began to slowly lower the red-hot poker into it. Jeanie and Bernard watched him in wonder not unmixed with fear, fascinated and yet repelled.

"Fire! fire!" a wild cry rang through the caravan. The little audience sprang up panic-stricken. Benches were overturned, people struggled frantically with each other in their haste to obtain an exit, children were trampled under foot. There was a strong and unmistakable smell of burning.

"Look Jeanie," cried Bernard, clinging to her. "'Tis the curtain!" And Jeanie turned to see a hanging cloud of flame filling one end of the caravan.

The terrified children endeavored vainly to push their way through the crowd that thronged towards the door, but they were driven back, buffeted and trodden upon. No one noticed them in the confusion that prevailed. Overcome by the heat and the crush Jeanie fell fainting to the ground.

Bernard tried to help her to her feet, but as he bent over her, a rough push flung him down, he struck his head against a bench and knew no more.

"Fire! fire!" That terrifying cry rang through the fair, and people hurried out from every direction just in time to see a lurid, flaming bonfire in that spot where had stood the caravan of one, Bill by name, who made a trade of swallowing red-hot poker.

The conflagration was attributed to the accidental overturning of one of the oil lamps that had lighted the van.

"An' the old place is insured," Bill said, as he lighted his pipe in the shelter of a hospitable neighbor's caravan, an hour later. "Insured for half again wot it wuz worth, I thanks my stars."

Jake tumbled up the steps of his aunt's caravan. He was white and trembling and his ragged clothes smelt of fire.

Jess sprang to the door to meet him, caught him by the collar, and dragged him in angrily.

"They're—they're burned," sobbed Jake, "they're burned, but it ain't my fault. I wished the poor kids no ill."

There were two men in the caravan, a policeman and a gentleman, a little gentleman who wore a loose brown velvet coat, and a soft felt hat and a picturesque red silk tie, and who looked like an artist. But Jake hardly saw them, so absorbed, was he by the ill news he bore.

"I—I thought the little 'uns would like to see Bill a swallerin' o' the red-hot pokers," he sobbed. "An' 'tweren't my fault. I couldn't 'elp the fire. Oh my!" And he burst into a flood of tears.

Jess bestowed upon her weeping nephew a vicious shake.

"Speak out, speak sense, or I'll thrash you black an' blue, you young vagabond," she cried shrilly.

"I be speakin' true," answered the boy still sobbing affrightedly; "the truth an' naught else. Oh, them poor little 'uns! My eye! how I do wish as I'd never set foot in that there Bill's van."

"My boy," said the little gentleman who looked like an artist, stepping forward and laying his hand upon Jake's torn sleeve. "Try to tell us clearly what has happened. Speak the truth and you have nothing to fear."

He spoke so gently and so kindly that the gipsy boy, too used to cruel words and rough blows, looked up at him wonderingly.

"So I will, mister," he answered, choking back the sobs that rose thick in his throat, "so I will. I ain't

no liar 'cept when I's beat fur tellin' o' the truth. Well sir, I took they little 'uns—the two of 'em—to see some o' the sights o' the fair, they bein' main dull shut up in this 'ere van. All wuz well till we got inter Bill's place to see 'im a swallerin' o' red-hot pokers. Then comes a shout: 'Fire! fire.' An' up jumps everyone and away they goes fur the door. Then somehow I loses sight o' the kids—how I dus-sent know, an' then—then—" Jake's voice quavered dismally—" I is out an' we all is out an' the little 'uns isn't to be found nowheres, an' folks say as they're burnt—burnt up in the fire. An' oh! 'tain't my fault, 'tain't my fault!" The gipsy boy sank down upon the floor crying bitterly.

"No, it is not your fault," said the little gentleman who looked like an artist. He spoke mechanically, his voice was low and level. Suddenly his thin, nervous face went deadly white. He put his hand to his head and sank into a chair.

"A glass o' water, quick," the policeman said to Jess.

"Be they his children?" she whispered curiously.

"One on 'em—the little girl," he answered beneath his breath. "Look sharp, woman," he added in a louder tone. "He's fainting."

"No, he ain't. He's speakin'," said Jake. "I heard un'."

"What did he say?" Jess asked sharply, while the policeman hastened to Dr. Allan's side.

"He wuz dreamin' I think," replied the gipsy boy. "Fur he didn't speak to none o' us. He spoke to his father. I heard 'im say quite plain, 'Father, thy will be done.'"

CHAPTER XII.

PAT AND PATTERS.

"To sleep, to sleep ! The long bright day is done,
And darkness rises from the fallen sun.

To sleep ! to sleep !

Whate'er thy griefs in sleep they fade away.

To sleep ! to sleep !

Sleep, mournful heart, and let the past be past.

Sleep, happy soul ! All life will sleep at last.

To sleep ! to sleep !"

—TENNYSON.

"WHERE am I ? Where can I be ?" murmured Jeanie.

She sat up and looked about her in a dazed and wondering fashion.

She found that she had been lying near the steps of a caravan, upon the soft, closely-clipped grass. By her side was a box arrangement that was unmistakably a barrel organ ; on the barrel organ was perched a monkey, dressed in a shabby military suit, decorated with tarnished gold braid. Beyond was a labyrinth of tents and caravans, and gaily festooned booths and noisy shooting galleries, and crowded stalls. Above was the calm and starlit sky of a fine summer's night, a sapphire sky studded with bright white lights.

"Where am I ?" Jeanie asked of the monkey. There was no one else to put the question to.

The monkey grinned and chattered.

"I don't understand your language," Jeanie said,

with a little sigh. "I wish I'd learned it 'stead of French. 'Tis much nicer, I daresay, an' p'raps there aren't no verbs. I can't bear verbs. But where am I? What's happened?" She put her hand to her head, and remembered with a flash the gentleman who swallowed red-hot pokers, the crowded caravan, and the dreadful cry of fire.

"Oh! where can Bernie be?" she cried then, a horrible fear chilling her heart.

Suddenly, round the corner of the caravan, came two figures, a ragged old man and a ragged little boy.

"She's awake, Jeanie's awake," cried the ragged little boy joyfully. "O Jeanie, you've been asleep so long, and I was frightened, I thought you'd never wake again!"

"You are so dreffly ragged an'—an', yes, I'm afraid, dirty. I can't hardly know that you're Bernard," the little girl said. "But you *are* Bernard, aren't you?" She looked at him solemnly, wistfully.

"I think so," the little Baronet answered. "But O Jeanie, so many, many queer things have happened that I don't really and truly feel sure. An' you, why you're ragged too, as ragged as me, an' you look very white an' tired. Are you tired?"

"I s'pose I am," said poor Jeanie wearily. "That fire was so drefful, an' the noise an' the crowd. I don't think I'll ever forget it."

"Now, you little uns, where d'you hang out, for I must be orf. My time here is up."

Jeanie turned to the speaker. He was a little old man with a face that was puckered and seamed all over with deep wrinkles, and small shrewd eyes that regarded her not unkindly.

Little Sir Bernard hastily introduced him.

"This is Mr. Pat, Jeanie," he said. "He's a very kind gentleman. He carried you an' me out of the van when that fire began. If he hadn't, he says we should have been frizzled up like fried potatoes. He's an organist, there's his organ. The monkey is called Patters, an' he's lived with Mr. Pat for years an' years, an' they are very fond of each other. An' when I'm grown up, Jeanie, I mean to be an organist, and have a monkey all mine own."

"You must have saved our lives," Jeanie exclaimed, with a grateful earnest glance at the old man.

"Well, well, little one, I put you out o' harm's way, anyone moight a' done that," he said deprecatingly. "But now," he added, "I must be orf an' on my road, so I'll bid good-bye to ye childer, an' you'd best get to yer home."

"We don't know how to get to it, though," cried Bernard. "An' I s'pose it must be miles an' miles away now."

The old man looked at him in some surprise. "Don't ye belong to un o' the vans?"

"Oh, no, we don't," Bernard replied most decidedly. "Tell him, Jeanie, will you, all 'bout it," he said, turning to her, "you'll 'splain better than me."

Pat listened to the children's story with grave attention and Patters listened too, his funny little head held knowingly on one side, a mischievous sparkle in his small, black, bead-like eyes.

"Well," the old man said, "I took ye for gipsy childer, an' that's a fac'? Yer ain parents wouldn't know yer, I'm thinkin'. An' now, wot's to be done wi' yer—hey?" He looked at them in a puzzled manner.

"I think you'd better take us home, Mr. Pat," said little Sir Bernard, with his usual frankness. "That'll be your best plan."

Jeanie said nothing, but she looked up at the old man with wistful eyes that expressed more than words.

"Well," he said, an amused smile lighting up his funny wrinkled face, "I should say you're 'bout right, young gentleman."

Bernard took his hand. "We'll start now, this d'reckly moment. I'm wanting to see my mother," he said in his imperative way.

"Right ye are," replied Pat. "But ye must bide a' instant whilst I hoists my argan. 'Twon't do to leave my stock-i'-trade behind, little mister. Coom, Patters, my boy. We be horf."

"May I carry the monkey?" Jeanie asked, stretching out her hands. "Do let me. I'll take great care of him."

"Sure you may an' welcome, missy," said the old man, smiling at her eagerness. "Leastways, if ye ain't afeared on 'im. The ladies sez when they sees Patters, they sez, 'Oh! what a hugly little wretch,' an' they shrieks out like as if they saw a live lion stuffed wi' straw!"

Jeanie laughed.

"Afraid of poor little Patters! What nonsense! Come, Patters, dear, an' I'll carry you ever so nicely."

The queer little creature nestled down in Jeanie's arms as though it knew that the child loved animals.

Bernard came and looked closely at Patters.

"He's got a face like an old man. He's just like the picture of my grandpapa at home," he said.

Pat had shouldered his organ, and now announced

that he was ready to start. So the strangely assorted party, the old organ grinder with his bulky instrument upon his back, and a broken clay pipe in his mouth, Jeanie with the monkey in her arms, and the little Baronet, who, with his ragged garments and bare feet, looked like some small denizen of caravans, set forth from the fair.

It was a beautiful summer's night, and clear and brilliant moonlight illumined the streets of the old historic town through which Pat and his little companions passed. It seemed to Jeanie that it must be a very large town, for on and on they paced down many a street and across many a highway before they left houses and shops, and great dark buildings, the antiquity and vastness of which amazed the children, and found themselves in the open country, where all was very still and quiet, and the wild roses nodded drowsily in the high hedges, and the cockchafer blundered by.

"Is it far to Bumbleton, please, Mr. Pat?" little Sir Bernard asked politely. He was tired and footsore, and the stones hurt his bare feet, all unaccustomed to such rough walking.

"Well," said the old man, trudging on, his organ on his bent back, his eyes fixed on the ground, a patient, tired figure that had so trudged on for many more years than the child at his side had known. "Well, I guess 'tis nigh on ten good mile. But we will rest by-'n-by, and then when we 'is freshened up a bit, the way'll seem shorter, you see."

"Ten miles," repeated the little Baronet. "Ten miles is a awful long way, isn't it, Mr. Pat?"

"It's a goodish stretch, young gentleman, fur little

feet like yourn. I dussent notice it much. I's used to it."

"Why do you always look upon the ground, Mr. Pat?"

"Doan't know, little mister. Guess I got inter the habit."

"You should look up, you know. Peoples ought always to look up. Miss Timms says so."

"An' why be we to look up, hey?" asked the old man, with a kindly smile at the little eager upturned face.

"'Cos heaven's up there," answered the child, lifting his hand towards the clear and starlit vault of sapphire.

"Heaven! And what's that?"

Was old Pat so ignorant? Perhaps he only asked the question that he might have a child's answer, who knows?

"Heaven is God's home," Bernard answered. "An' by-an'-by the angels will take us to live there an' we shall be happy for ever, an' no one will cry or be naughty or sorry any more." So he spoke, looking upwards at the quiet night sky with sweet childlike eyes in which shone a brighter light than that of the stars—the light of faith.

"That must be a good place," the old organ grinder said huskily. "A main good place. But 'tis only meant for the rich folk, I guess?" He looked down wistfully into the little earnest face at his side.

"I don't know," Bernard answered doubtfully. "But Jeanie knows, 'twas Jeanie's father who told me 'bout it. Ask her."

"Heaven is for rich an' poor people, both alike," the

little girl said quickly. "An' no one's poor any more up there, Mr. Pat, never poor nor sad. Papa says so, an' papa knows everything."

"You're poor an' sad, aren't you, Mr. Pat?" enquired Bernard, in his frank and outspoken fashion.

"O Bernie," whispered Jeanie, giving him an admonishing nudge.

But old Pat did not mind, he only smiled down on the little boy.

"I bain't as young as I were, young gentleman," he said, "an' my old bones aches a bit sometimes when I has to sleep under the hedges o' a damp night an' ca'ant foind the pence to pay fur a lodgin'. But I doan't complain, I doan't, I gits along right enough. Still that's a good place you speaks of, sir, a rare an' good place it must be; I'd like to know the way to it, though I guess 'tis too steep fur a old man like me."

"Papa will show you the way, we'll ask him to," Jeanie said eagerly.

"Will they let me take Patters an' the old argan along?" Pat enquired anxiously.

Jeanie looked somewhat doubtful, but while she was pondering on a reply, Bernard answered promptly.

"Why yes," he said in his clear, sweet, decisive voice. "*In course* they will, Mr. Pat. Everybody will take everything they wants to heaven."

This sounded such a comfortable doctrine, that Jeanie did not like to question it. Besides, she thought, might not Bernard's view be the right one?

"Where d'you live, Mr. Pat?" Bernard asked. "In that big town we've just come out of?"

"I don't live nowheres in pertick'ler," the old man answered. "I tramps 'bout country wi' my argan an'

Patters, an' we 'tends the fairs and sich loike shows. That's how I picks up my livin'. I knows this 'ere old England o' ours better nor any g'ography book ever writ. I 'a tramped over it now for nigh on fifty year. I'm an old man, childer, an' I been an argan player ever sin' I first growed up."

"You look old," the little Baronet said sympathetically; "but not so old as the gentleman who lives on red-hot pokers. Did you ever swallow a red-hot poker, Mr. Pat?"

"Bless yer 'art no, little gentleman. I prefers bread an' cheese, an' a bit o' meat when I can git it."

"I'm so tired," Jeanie said wearily. "I—I don't think I can go any further." She sank down upon the grass, little Patters fast asleep in her arms, his funny little wizened face resting against her neck.

"We'll bide here a while an' take a rest," the old organ grinder remarked, as he shifted his instrument from his shoulders; "creep up a bit under the hedge, childer, an' you'll not get the night wind so much. Stay a instant, an' I'll lay my jacket over ye."

He was going to pull it off, but Jeanie stopped him.

"We shan't want it, we're quite warm, truly we are," she said, earnestly.

And Bernard hastily added in his most convincing tone: "We're as warm—as warm as toast, Mr. Pat, thank you." The children would not have deprived the poor old man of one of his few comforts for worlds, and Jeanie's tender little heart was full of compassion, when she glanced from the tattered coat to Pat's worn, aged face.

"We're only in rags for a little while," she thought,

"but he lives in them always, an' he's old and tired, an' gets rheumatism when he has to sleep under a hedge on a damp night, poor thing."

"Bernie," she said, "we must say our evenin' prayers. We can say them just as well out here as at home, you know."

"But," the little Baronet objected, "I'm sleepy, *awful* sleepy, Jeanie. Don't you think 'twould do if we was to say *double* prayers to-morrow mornin'?"

Jeanie would have none of this.

"Not at all," she said, severely. "Of course not."

"Then you say the prayers an' I'll say Amen; that'll be all right, won't it, Jeanie?"

"I s'pose so. But you're a lazy boy, Bernie."

"I'm drefful tired. Really and truly, I am. An' I'll say Amen very loud, Jeanie, an' Mr. Pat will say it, too, won't you, Mr. Pat?"

"Bless ye, yes, little master, if it pleases ye."

"Thank you, Mr. Pat. You're a very nice man. You always say 'yes,' an' I like peoples that always says yes."

"Now, you must be quiet, Bernie. I'm going to begin."

The children knelt side by side in the moonlight, and Jeanie repeated her simple prayers.

"Now the evenin' hymn," the little girl said, and her soft, reverent tones fell upon the silence of the peaceful summer's night:

"Now the day is over,
Night is drawing nigh,
Shadows of the evening
Creep across the sky."

Now the darkness gathers,
Stars begin to peep,
Birds and beasts and flowers
Soon will fall asleep.

Jesus, give the weary
Calm and sweet repose,
With thy tenderest blessing
May mine eyelids close.
"Amen."

"Amen."

"Please to say Amen, Mr. Pat."

"Certingly, little master. Amen. They wuz pretty words, and in special 'bout the weary. There be a many weary folk."

"But Jesus will give them 'calm and sweet repose' if they ask him," Jeanie said, in her simple way. "Good-night, Mr. Pat. Bernie's asleep already, an' I think I'll soon be asleep, too."

"Good-night, missy."

The children rested beneath a sheltering hedge that was fragrant with sweet briar and honeysuckle. Old Pat sat at a little distance from them, his gaunt and shabby figure propped up against his barrel organ, the funny, wrinkled face of the monkey peeping out weirdly from his coat. Jeanie, looking at him with drowsy eyes, thought of the picture of a gnome in a certain fairy-tale book at home.

"He's just like that," she thought, "only bigger. I should think he's a magnified gnome. P'raps the fairies sent him to find Bernie an' me, and bring us safe home. The fairies! I wonder if they're sleepin' in the closed petals of those pretty little pink roses up there? Mr. Pat, did you ever see a fairy?"

The dark, gaunt figure, that made such a queer, fantastic silhouette against the moonlit background, started at the clear, high-pitched childish tones.

"A fairy, missy? Noa, the fairies don't keer for owld folk, such as me."

"There are a great many stars to-night. D'you know what the stars are, Mr. Pat? They're the angels' lamps that they hang up in the sky at night, so's people shall see the way to heaven, tho' the world is dark. It's very kind of the angels, isn't it?"

"Bless ye, yes, little un. But, missy, that heaven be high up; too high for we to climb to, I'm thinkin'." The old man raised his worn face wistfully to the starlit sky.

"The angels will carry us when it's time to go," Jeanie said. "Their wings are strong, an' they can fly higher than any bird, higher even than the lark."

"But sure, missy, they'd not lower themselves to carry an old argan grinder," Pat said, doubtfully. "No, no, 'tis the rich folk they come for."

"Papa says they love the poor ones best," Jeanie answered. Her voice sounded drowsy. Her curly head fell back upon the dewy grass. Sleep had set its sweet seal upon the childish eyes.

"They loves the poor ones best," old Pat muttered. A curious smile flickered over his lined and wrinkled face. "Calm and sweet repose," he repeated. "That sounds good, and 'tis fur sich as me, too; she said it, an' there's truth writ in her innercent face." Then he, too, slept as peacefully as the children.

* * * * *

"I had such funny dreams," little Sir Bernard was saying, in his clear, high pitched voice, "Awful funny

dream. Really and truly, Mr. Pat, I did dream that I was swallowing red-hot pokers, like the gentleman at the fair, an' my mother was turning the handle of your organ, while Tootsie—she's my little dog, you know—and Patters were dancing a waltz together. Then someone called very loud 'Fire, fire!' and I woke."

Jeanie sat up and tossed the curls back from her face. It was morning—early morning, and the beautiful bloom of a delicious summer's dawn lay upon the still drowsy world. There was a hayfield on the other side of the hedge, under which the children had slept. The hay smelt sweet and fresh. A brook skirted the meadow not twenty yards distant, and its dancing waters sparkled in the sunshine. In the valley stood a neat-roofed farmstead, ancient and picturesque. Long-winged pigeons fluttered and flapped around the high, old-fashioned chimney stacks. A spiral column of thin blue smoke went up slowly towards the rose-flushed sky of dawn. A mile away rose the wooded downs, with the mist of morning, softly shrouding the everlasting greenery of those tall, graceful fir-trees the children loved.

"*Our* downs!" cried Jeanie. Ah! how glad she was to see them once more; how glad, and how thankful. She gazed in rapture upon their familiar beauty.

"An' Mr. Pat says we'll be home to-day," Bernard told her joyfully.

"O Bernie!" Jeanie clasped her hands.

"I shall be glad to see my mother again!" the little fellow exclaimed.

Old Pat beamed upon them both.

"You be the better for yer night's rest, I'm thinkin', childer," he said. "But bless your poor little feet, how they're blistered!"

"It's 'cos we're not used to walking without shoes and stockings," Jeanie told him. "But they don't hurt much, an' they'll soon be well."

At home Jeanie had sometimes been rather given to grumbling, but the little girl had learnt more than one lesson during the last few days. This new experience had taught her many things that Miss Brady's well intended counsels might never have impressed upon her. Jeanie was careless and impetuous, but she had plenty of common sense, and this little taste of hardship and adversity would not be lost upon her. She would, henceforth, think more gratefully of her father's loving care, and of gentle, little Effie's patient affection, and even of Annette's rather fussy kindness; and the little home at Rose Villa would seem dearer than ever, after this strange sojourn in caravans, and these nights spent in the shelter of a roadside hedge. Jeanie, dreaming on and taking happiness and prosperity as her rightful heritage, had experienced a rough awakening, and such awakenings we all need sometimes, lest we become selfish and idle, and so forget that time is flying, flying fast, and "It is not always May!"

"I'm hungry. Let's have breakfast," the little Baronet said.

Old Pat looked down upon him with an indulgent smile.

"We got to earn it first, little master," he answered. "There ain't no breakfast fur we this mornin' if we doan't earn it."

"But how are we to earn it?" Bernard asked with some anxiety, for he had fallen asleep supperless on the previous evening, and this morning he felt really hungry, a sensation he had never before experienced in all his luxurious little life.

"We'll go down to yonder farm an' play un a tune or two on the argan, and then they'll give we some bread and some milk for payment," said the old organ grinder, hoisting his instrument on to his stooping shoulders as he spoke. "An' Patters shall dance. You ain't seen him dance, childer? He duz it beautiful."

"May I turn the handle of the organ, Mr. Pat, when we get to the farm—may I?"

"Sure, yes, little gentleman, if you'll be main keerful. It's a bit ould, the argan is, like me, an' it don't do to turn the 'andle 'ard. Ye see?"

"I'll be *awful* careful, I 'sure you, Mr. Pat," the little Baronet said earnestly. "Is the organ old? I'm sorry. I'll ask my mother to buy you a b'u'ful new one when I get home."

"It'll last as long as me, I 'spects, thanking ye all the same, little un. 'Tis an ould friend wot I'd not like to give up. Me, and Patters, an' the argan, will go on together to the close o' the day."

"We'll ask God every day to let you take Patters an' the organ to heaven with you, Mr. Pat," said Jeanie earnestly. "We really will, won't we, Bernie?"

"Certainly," he answered quickly. "I won't forget."

The farm that nestled in the valley was a very pretty farm. Lovely, flowering creepers wreathed the grey stone walls of the ancient house, and peeped in

at the open lattice windows, and twined themselves about the rustic porch. A cloud of pigeons whirled about the high chimney stacks. The garden was full of sweet, old-fashioned flowers, over which the bees and the butterflies flitted gaily. Great picturesque barns and outbuildings enclosed a yard, wherein had been penned for the night sleek, tawny, Alderney cows, that looked at the children with mild, brown eyes, and little, long-legged calves, that skipped away at the strangers' approach. A colony of rooks inhabited a group of tall and stately oaks, and their monotonous cawing fell pleasantly upon the still summer air.

A handsome colley dog sprang out of his kennel, barking loudly, and rattling the chain that tethered him. At this warning a woman came out of the house, a pleasant-faced woman, whose cheeks reminded Jeanie of two rosy apples, and who wore a gown of as bright a pink as the blossom of the May tree.

"Good mornin' to ye, missus," Old Pat said politely. "Wi' yer leave I'll play ye a tune, an' maybe your children will like to see my monkey here a dancin'."

A smile overspread the good-humored face of the farmer's wife as she looked at the quaint figure of the old organ grinder, the wicked, wrinkled face of the tiny monkey, and the two pretty, ragged children, with their curly hair and innocent eyes.

"You may play us a tune, if ye will," she said. "An' I'll call my little ones. They'll be main taken wi' that queer, small monkey o' yours."

"Mollie—Mollie! Susie!"

At the call two little fat girls, dressed exactly alike

in blue cotton frocks and big sun bonnets, came running up the garden. They looked about five years old, and seemed to be twins. Their little, round, rosy faces were as similar the one to the other as two cherries off the same twig.

Patters called forth many expressions of delight, and when he executed a quaint little dance, and pulled off his soldier's cap and waved it in the air, Mollie and Susie shrieked rapturously, and demanded of their mother lumps of sugar wherewith to reward his talented performance.

The little Baronet turned the handle of Pat's old organ with great care and pride, and his ears were quite unaffected by the jarring notes of "Hi-tiddle-ty-ti" and "Sally in our Alley."

"I shall be an organ grinder when I'm grown-up," he told Pat. "I meant to be a soldier, and wear a clankin' sword, but I've quite 'cided that this is a nicer perfession."

"This is for your music," the farmer's wife said to Pat, and held out a bright new sixpenny piece.

"Thank'ee kindly, missus," he answered, without taking it from her. "But if you'll be so obligin' as to give these 'ere little uns a bite o' bread, an' a sup o' milk instead, I'd fur rayther take that for payment."

"Take the money, and you shall all have some breakfast as well," returned the farmer's wife kindly. "Coom away in here, and bring the monkey along. You can set your music box in the porch, old man, none will touch it."

She led the way into a large and comfortably furnished kitchen. There were rows of shining metal

pots and pans on the walls, and boxes of geranium in the window place, and cosy seats in the wide open chimney. It looked very snug and comfortable.

"Sit ye down, all o' you," said the farmer's wife, and she fetched newly baked bread, and fresh milk, and set it before the wayfarers, with a generous hospitality that became her well.

"Fall to, an' eat while ye may, children," she advised them, and Jeanie and Bernard needed no second bidding.

A little dog sat up on the wooden settle before the hearth, and watched Patters' queer monkey figure, in its absurd, tawdry soldier's dress, very intently. It was a funny little puppy, white, with a black head, and a cunning black tip to its tail, as though it had accidentally dipped it into the inkpot. Patters made dreadful grimaces at it, and it barked shrilly, and then the farmer's two fat little girls ran to it, and half smothered it with caresses, after which, Mollie picked it up, and held it fast in her chubby little arms, a struggling, long-legged, black and white thing, that growled and snarled its indignation at the invading Patters, in a futile and utterly ridiculous manner.

"Have you come from Oldford Fair, you and the children?" the farmer's wife asked Pat, as she refilled his glass with milk.

"Aye," he answered, "that is so."

"Where be you a-going next?"

"To Bumbleton. I b'lieve 'taint far, eh missus?"

"No, not more nor eight mile fra' here, across the Downs as the crow flies. Still 'tis a long walk fur children this hot day," and she glanced compassionately at Jeanie and Bernard.

"It's fur enough," old Pat admitted. Much experience of this world's ways, had taught him the value of reticence.

"Your grandchildren?" questioned the farmer's wife looking at the children.

Pat shook his head.

"The boy's a pretty little fellow, poor lamb. What's your name, my dear?" She laid her hand caressingly on Bernard's curly head.

The little Baronet looked up at her with his sunniest smile. He liked this kind-faced woman, who was so friendly, and who had given them a good breakfast.

"My name's Bernard," he said, "Sir Bernard Bentinck. I'm very much obliged to you for this nice breakfast. You are very kind."

"Sir Bernard Bentinck! Bless the child, what's he a talkin' about?" gasped the astonished woman, staring incredulously at the little ragged, barefooted figure.

"That's my name," said the child. "Don't you like it? I'm sorry. Most people like it. It was my grandfather's name, and he was a brave soldier, and came back from war, with medals all over him, and when I'm grown up, I mean to be as brave as he was, only I shall be an organ player, like Mr. Pat, an' have a monkey that can dance, and take off its cap."

"Is the boy daft?" the farmer's wife asked of Jeanie.

"I don't know what that word means," answered the little girl somewhat bewilderedly. "But Bernie is only telling you the truth. We got lost, an'—an'

the gipsies took us, an' then there was a fire in a caravan, and Mr. Pat pulled us out and saved our lives, an' now he's taking us home to Bumbleton. That's how it is."

The farmer's wife looked from old Pat to his little charges wonderingly.

"It's fur all like some tale in a book!" she exclaimed. "And to think o' he in his rags a' being a Baronet! Well I never!"

"I'm ragged, 'cos the gipsies took my clothes," said Bernard with dignity. "I can't help that."

"Bless ye, no, my poor little dear! Well, old man," she turned to Pat, "I guess you'd best leave these children here along o' me, an' my husband shall drive 'em over to Bumbleton in his dog cart this afternoon. The poor dears' feet are blistered, and they've had more'n enough o' tramping, that's certain."

But little Sir Bernard hastily interposed.

"I mean to keep with Mr. Pat," he said, very decidedly. "I mean to keep with him till I get home. Mr. Pat is very kind, an' I don't want to leave him, an' I like the organ and Patters."

"It is very kind of you to say that about your carriage," Jeanie said politely to the farmer's wife. "But I think the same as Bernie, that we had better keep with Mr. Pat, 'cos he's been so very good to us. I want him to come to Bumbleton, so's my father can thank him." And she laid a grateful little hand upon the old man's bent shoulder.

"Well I'll tell ye what it is," said the farmer's wife. "My good man shall give ye all a lift, the organ player, an' his music box, an' his monkey too. There's plenty o' room i' the cart fur the party, an' this ain't

no weather fur a little lady an' gentleman to be trampin' hot an' dusty roads. Now rest all o' ye, till my husband cooms in, an' then we'll soon settle the affair. But missy," she added, cutting old Pat's thanks short, and turning to the little girl. "If you'll take my advice, you an' your brother will coom upstairs along o' me, an' get a wash, an' some clean clothes. It'll just give your ma a fit I'm thinking, to see you dressed in them awful rags. Deary me! I'd not like to set eyes on my Mollie an' Susie, in such a plight."

Jeanie and Bernard were quite ready to fall in with this arrangement; and Jeanie was soon clad in some of the garments appertaining to Mollie and Susie—which, although somewhat short and tight, looked at least clean and neat; while Bernard appeared in a smock-frock and straw hat, belonging to the cow-keeper's boy.

When the children came back into the kitchen, after making this change of attire, Susie and Mollie danced round them gleefully, and the black-and-white puppy yapped and shrieked; and old Pat looked at everyone with a benevolent smile.

"Take the little lady an' gentleman out to see the Alderney calves, and the young chicks, Susie and Mollie," said the farmer's wife.

So Jeanie and Bernard were led forth by the chubby, apple-cheeked twins, to see all the wonders of the farm; while old Pat fell asleep upon the settle, in front of the hearth, Patters nestling in his coat, and the black-and-white puppy went out into the porch and barked at the ancient barrel organ, that was propped up against the wall.

"Soon we shall be at home, Bernie," said Jeanie.

"Yes," he responded joyfully. "Safe at home, once more. Jeanie, I shall just kiss muvvy till she's all kissed away, and I shan't never—no never again go out to look for fairies."



MOLLIE.

CHAPTER XIII.

SAFE HOME.

“ Around each pure domestic shrine,
Bright flowers of Eden bloom and twine,
Our hearts are altars, all ;
The prayers of hungry souls and poor,
Like armèd angels at the door,
Our unseen foes appal.”

—KEBLE.

“ WHAT is the time, Miss Timms ? ”

“ It is just five o'clock. Ah ! here is Thomas, with the tea. You must take a cup of tea, dear Lady Bentinck, it will refresh you and do you good.”

“ You are absurd ! Nothing can refresh me just

now. No, do not bring me tea, I can't take it. Oh! where can Dr. Allan be? He should have returned hours ago."

Lady Bentinck had been restlessly pacing up and down the great drawing-room at "The Chestnuts" for the last half hour. Now she threw herself upon a cushioned lounge, and pressed her small white hand to her head with a heavy sigh.

Miss Timms glanced anxiously, compassionately, at the slight figure, daintily clad in delicate pale pink crêpon, and stealthily brushed the tears from her own eyes. She was too humble a personage to be permitted to indulge in grief; she must disguise her own sorrow as best she might, and set herself to the task—an apparently hopeless one—of soothing her employer's woes.

A vision of a bright, sunny, childish face, a vivid remembrance of a glad, imperious boy's voice, that had always had a note of welcome for her, made self-control difficult to Lady Bentinck's companion. There was but little love in the grey monotony of Miss Timms' quiet life—so little, that this gift of a child's affection had seemed inexpressively dear to her.

"He was wilful and imperious sometimes," she thought. "But—heaven bless him for it—always good to me."

Lady Bentinck's grief was of the petulant, unreasoning sort, that turns impatiently from the most well-intentioned attempts at consolation, and vents itself in hysterical weeping, and wild, childish lamentations. Miss Timms had had a trying time with her—a time that had called forth all her devotion and all her patience. Lady Bentinck was not accustomed to pay

any great consideration to the feelings of other people—least of all to the feelings of her humble little companion. She was not deliberately unkind to anyone; she was too soft and delicate a creature for that—but she was intensely selfish in her joys and sorrows alike; and she was wont to claim prosperity and happiness as a sort of right, and to resent pain and trouble with the blindness of a spoiled child.

“I love my boy better than anything in all the wide world, and now he is taken from me!” she had sobbed out, in her first outbreak of grief, and there had been as much indignation as sorrow in her voice.

Now Miss Timms looked at her sorrowfully, and in silence. She dared offer no attempt at consolation; no expression of genuine sympathy. Sick at heart, and sad, she took up her knitting and worked on monotonously, with down-bent head.

“How can you sit there and knit!” cried Lady Bentinck, indignantly. “Are you made of stone?”

Poor Miss Timms! her tears fell fast, at the unjust implication. She did not speak. How could she answer such wild words?

“Don’t cry, don’t cry!” exclaimed Lady Bentinck, tremulously. “Or, if you must, go out of the room. I cannot tolerate another’s grief just now.”

“Dear Lady Bentinck, you know how I love him—the dear, dear child,” faltered the little companion. “If—if I might venture some poor word of sympathy.”

“All I beg of you is silence,” replied the distracted mother, passionately.

Miss Timms bent her head in mild, unquestioning acquiescence.

Lady Bentinck threw herself down upon the sofa-cushions and wept, with the abandonment of a child.

Suddenly the door was flung open, and a servant announced :

“ Miss Allan.”

Effie came slowly into the room, her face white and sad ; her eyelids swollen, from many tears. When she saw Lady Bentinck, a sob rose in her throat, and she paused—standing silently in the centre of the large room.

“ Come here, child ; come here, Effie,” little Bernard’s mother said, tremulously, wistfully, and stretched out her arms to her.

“ O Lady Bentinck ! ” Effie ran to her and knelt beside her, crying softly, and they clung to one another as two who shared a common sorrow.

Miss Timms crept out of the room. She knew that she was not wanted. This child would comfort Lady Bentinck, as she, with all her patient devotion, never might.

* * * * *

An hour later Dr. Allan came. He looked ill and aged, and when Brace asked him, “ Have you any news of them, sir ? ” he answered in a low voice, “ The worst.”

“ Then may heaven help my lady ! ” cried the man, “ for she’s nigh wild with grief already. Little Sir Bernard is all the world to her.”

He opened the drawing-room door as he spoke, and Dr. Allan found himself face to face with Lady Bentinck and Effie.

“ O papa ! ” cried the little girl, running to meet

him. "Have you found them? Have you found poor Jeanie?"

He looked from her tear-stained, eager face to the pale and agitated countenance of her companion. Lady Bentinck strove to speak, but her white lips refused to frame a word, and she sank back half fainting upon the sofa.

How could he tell them the truth? Into what poor phrases could he put the terrible news which it had fallen to his lot to break?

He must tell this lovely young mother, all unacquainted with sadness and trouble, that her only child was gone from her for ever, that her idolized boy might never again in this world be hers. He must tell his little daughter that the twin sister who had been her companion in work and play ever since she could remember, would share her joys and sorrows no more.

He could not do it. He stood before them in silence, his head down-bent, a numbing weight of grief, of inexpressible compassion for these, who as yet knew not the worst, crushing the very life out of him. It was a dreadful moment.

Then suddenly the entrance bell rang loudly, clanging through the old house, and the next moment there were voices in the hall, excited, eager voices.

The color rushed into Lady Bentinck's white face, and she darted forward, crying "My boy, my boy!"

Dr. Allan hurried to her side.

"No, no!" he said quickly. "It can't be, it can't be. My poor lady, listen to me. Ah! how can I tell you? But I must."

She put him aside impatiently.

"You may tell me by-and-by. What you have to say must wait. My boy is here. I heard his voice."

Dr. Allan looked at her in amazement and with deepest compassion. Was this strange fancy the delirium of grief?

"Sit down, my dear lady," he said soothingly. "Try to be calm, I beg of you."

She did not seem to hear him. She opened the drawing-room door and went out with quick and eager steps into the corridor, an expectant light on her pretty young face.

Dr. Allan put Effie aside and followed her.

"Muvvy, muvvy!"

There was no mistaking the clear childish voice, and no mistaking the little curl-crowned head and the lovely boyish face of the little Baronet, albeit he was disguised as some small countryman, in smock-frock and straw hat. Dr. Allan gazed upon him in wondering, incredulous amazement.

But Lady Bentinck knew no wonder, she only knew that her boy was hers once more, and she clasped her darling to her heart in speechless joy and happiness.

"O muvvy, darling, how glad, how *awful* glad I is to have you kiss me again!" cried little Sir Bernard, clinging to his pretty young mother.

"Papa dear, please forgive me," and Jeanie was in her father's arms.

"My poor little girl, my little Jeanie! You must have passed through terrible dangers?"

Jeanie did not hear him. She had turned to Effie, and the re-united twins were crying together from sheer happiness.

What a re-union that was! What tears, what

laughter, what questions and answers! Ah! no pen could describe the homely and yet touching domestic scene. There were no reproofs for the little wanderers who had strayed away in search of fairyland only to find trouble and misfortune. No one could feel sufficiently severe to reproach them.

"They have had a practical experience worth ten thousand scoldings," said Dr. Allan, and he was right.

"Muvvy," little Sir Bernard whispered, when Lady Bentinck came to his bedside a few hours later to wish him "good-night." "Muvvy, I never knew how much I loved you till I was lost in the wood. I love you truly, muvvy!"

"And I love you, my darling," she answered, kissing him.

"D'you know who took care o' me, an' brought me safe home to you muvvy, do you?"

"Well, my dear, I suppose the very Bohemian person whom you are pleased to call Mr. Pat."

"No, muvvy; it was not Mr. Pat I meant. I meant God. Jeanie asked him to take care o' us an' bring us home, and he did. He sent Mr. Pat to us, you know. I think it was very good of God to listen to two little children's prayers, but Jeanie says he always does."

"Yes, darling."

"Will you thank him, muvvy?"

"If you wish it, Bernie."

"I do wish it. I think 'twould seem grateful, don't you? Please thank him right away, muvvy, an' I'll say Amen."

Lady Bentinck hesitated.

"What am I to say, my child?" she asked.

"Don't you know what to say?"

"Well; no, Bernie, I don't."

"I'll say it then, as well as I can."

He knelt upon his bed, a little, white-robed figure, and folded his hands.

"Our Father," repeated the childish voice reverently. "Muvvy an' me is very grateful 'cos I'm safe home again. Our Father we thank thee for taking care of me.

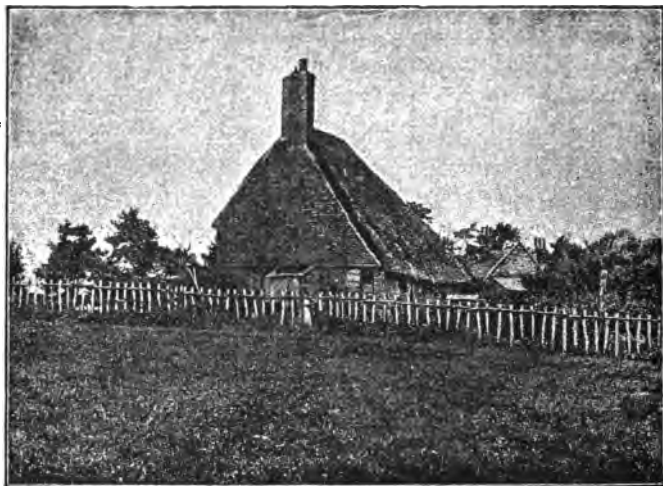
"Say Amen, muvvy; an' you must fold your hands—so."

"Amen."

"That's right. I'm glad we've done it, although I didn't know how very well. Aren't you glad, muvvy?"

"Yes, dear."

"You look rather grave, you know. Now kiss me once more, an' I'll go to sleep. I'm *awful* sleepy."



FAR AWAY ON THE DOWNS.

CHAPTER XIV.

CALM AND SWEET REPOSE.

"The land beyond the sea!
Sometimes across the strait,
Like a drawbridge to a castle gate,
The slanting sunbeams lie and seem to wait
For us to pass to thee,
Calm land beyond the sea!"

—F. W. FABER.

OLD PAT was not forgotten amid the general rejoicings. Jeanie and Bernard were eager to recount his many kindnesses to them, and to tell how he had saved them from the burning caravan, when, but for

his intervention, they must have perished in the dreadful flames. The poor old organ grinder's worn face flushed with gratification when Dr. Allan shook his hand and thanked him earnestly for what he had done for the lost children.

"It's happy I wuz to serve them, the dear innercents," he said. "An' their prattlin' tongues an' pretty ways made the road seem short, bless 'em."

It was decided that Pat should spend the night at least at Rose Villa, and that on the following day a plan for his benefit should be discussed and decided upon. Dr. Allan had some interest in an almshouse in the neighborhood, and he hoped that by his efforts the old organ grinder might be elected to fill a recent vacancy. If this could be arranged, Pat's traveling days would be done, and he and Patters and the organ might rest from their labors in a quiet and comfortable home far from the noise of fairs and the dust of highways.

The kindly little doctor talked to Pat on this subject that evening, when the old man sat before the kitchen fire, with Patters on his knees, and the organ propped up against the wall at no great distance.

"A quiet 'ome an' no more work," repeated the old fellow, a faint smile flickering over his worn and wrinkled face. "Sure an' that sounds good, yer honor. But you're very good to me, and I dussent deserve it, sir," he added, looking up rather anxiously at the shrewd, sympathetic face of the country practitioner.

"You saved my child's life, Pat; that deed deserves all the gratitude I can show."

The old organ grinder was much impressed by the

cleanliness and comfort of the little kitchen at Rose Villa. He quite won Annette's heart by his naive and outspoken admiration of this her special territory, and as he treated her most respectfully and always addressed her as "Honored Mum" she regarded him with much favor.

"Anyone can tell as he's seen better days," she said to Arthur, who was polishing the doctor's boots and whistling a lively air at the back door.

"I'd pity 'im if 'e'd seen wuss," responded Arthur, with a comprehensive glance at the ragged garments of poor old Pat.

"Ah! that's nothin' to what you'll come to if you're always a playing on your concertina when you ought to be minding your work," said Annette, hastening to point a moral. Then she bustled back into the kitchen before Arthur could hazard a reply.

Jeanie and Effie came to bid "Mr. Pat" good-night before they went to bed, and shook hands with the old fellow, "Fur all the world as though I'd been a gentleman," as he said afterwards wonderingly to Annette.

"Papa's going to find you a nice home, Mr. Pat, so's you needn't tramp about and get tired any more, but only rest," Jeanie told him.

He smiled as his eyes rested upon her pretty, eager face.

"Seems to me, missy, as 't will be like your hymn wot you wuz a-sayin' last night out i' the fields. 'Calm an' sweet repose.' Them's the words, I think, missy."

"Oh, I remember! Yes, those are the words." And Jeanie repeated softly:

“ ‘Jesus give the weary
Calm and sweet repose,
With thy tenderest blessing
May mine eyelids close.’ ”

“That’s it,” said old Pat. “ ‘Calm an’ sweet repose.’ ” A happy light stole over his aged face. “Them’s good tidings for one as has tramped i’ heat an’ cold fur years,” he continued slowly. “Welcome tidings.”

The children smiled and nodded to him as they went out at the door. He looked after them almost wistfully.

“They seems to me like little angels, they’re so good to the old man,” he told Annette.

“They’re good children, though, bless you, they’re not angels, nothing like,” responded Annette, who was busily engaged in washing the teacups and saucers. She wiped her hands, pulled off her apron and stooped to give a vigorous poke to the kitchen fire.

“I must leave you a bit now, old gentleman. I’ve got to see my little ladies to bed. You’ll take a doze no doubt while I’m gone,” she said kindly.

“Don’t think o’ me, honored mum,” he replied. “I’m main comfortable a-sittin’ in this fine armchair. I guess I ain’t never been comfortabler in all my life.”

“That’s right.” And she hurried away to attend to her duties.

* * * * *

Annette had various calls upon her attention. She was absent for nearly an hour. When she re-entered

the little kitchen, the room was dim with the dusk of evening, and there was no sound save the monotonous tick-tack of the eight-day clock in the corner. Arthur, his duties over, had betaken himself home. The little maid, who assisted Annette, had retired to bed.

Annette glanced at the bent and ragged figure in the armchair. The old organ grinder did not speak. He seemed to be asleep.

She lit a lamp, and set it upon the table. Then, impelled by she knew not what, she turned and once more looked at the old man. Something strange in his quiet face startled her, and made her hurry to the doctor's study.

Doctor Allan was sitting by the open window reading.

"You think he looks ill?" he repeated. "It is only exhaustion, I daresay, the sleep of exhaustion. But I'll come and look at him."

He put down his book, and followed her into the kitchen.

Annette lifted the lamp and held it so that the light fell full upon the old, bent figure in the chair. Dr. Allan, with one glance at the quiet face, put his fingers on the old man's wrist.

Annette looked up at him quickly, her eyes put a question that there was no need for her lips to form.

"He is dead," said the doctor in a low voice. "Failure of the heart's action, I should suppose. Well, his weary tramp is over at last, he is at rest."

It was true. The old, bent, ragged figure of the organ grinder still sat in the armchair, passive and quiet, but the soul had fled. The worn, wrinkled face wore a calm and happy look, and a faint smile curved

the pale lips. Old Pat, after many weary years of poverty and struggle and homeless wanderings, had gone at last to the land of silence and of rest.

* * * * *

"The angels came an' carried him to heaven, 'cos they knew he was so tired, poor thing," little Sir Bernard said, when they told him. "We taught him, Jeanie and I, to say that sweet verse :

" 'Jesus give the weary
Calm and sweet repose,
With thy tenderest blessing
May mine eyelids close.'

And the Lord Jesus heard him, and sent the angels." Then, his eyes filling with tears, he added, "but I wish I'd said good-bye to him, he was so kind to Jeanie an' me. I don't think I thanked him half enough."

"We shall be able to thank him more when we meet him in heaven," Jeanie answered simply.

"D'you think he'll 'member us then, Jeanie?"

"Yes, I'm sure he will. I don't think he's a forgettin' person."

"That's all right then. But O Jeanie, he never took Patters an' the organ with him to heaven, an' you know he wanted to, *awful* much."

"P'raps they'll go by-an'-by. Patters is goin' to live with Effie an' me, now. Chum's rather jealous, but he's so good, I'm sure he'll be nice to the poor little monkey."

"Jeanie," and the little Baronet lowered his voice. "D'you know they are going to put poor Mr. Pat's

body into a deep, dark hole in the churchyard, into a *grave*, Jeanie." His eyes grew very round, and he caught his breath as though half-frightened.

"But its only his *body*, Bernie, not the feelin' part of him, you know. The part that feels an' knows, what is called the soul, is safe in heaven."

Bernard looked at her wistfully.

"Poor body," he said. "Doesn't Mr. Pat care for it any more?"

"Don't you understand, Bernie? The body's nothing when the soul's gone out of it. It doesn't feel or know or see any more. It's dead. 'Tis like when we're asleep an' our soul goes away in dreams."

"It's too big a think for my little head, I b'lieve," Bernard remarked gravely.

"I daresay," agreed Jeanie. "I s'pose when we're older, we'll know a great many things that puzzled us now. But," she added gravely, "we shall never know everything in this world, there will always be some things we can't understand, papa says."

"When shall we know them?" asked the little Baronet curiously.

"When we get to heaven, papa says. He says that when the light of God's throne falls upon us we shall see quite clearly everything, an' understand."

Little hands planted flowers on old Pat's quiet grave in the country churchyard of Bumbleton, and little feet trod softly upon the long green grass where the daisies and the buttercups grew wild and sweet. The children remembered the old organ grinder still, when many summers and winters had come and gone, and the slab of stone that marked his last long resting place had lost its primary whiteness. There was a

simple inscription upon that stone, an inscription that ran thus :—

“PAT,”
An Organ Grinder,
Who died at Bumbleton, July, 188—

“Jesus, give the weary
Calm and sweet repose,
With thy tenderest blessing
May mine eyelids close.”

CHAPTER XV.

FINE FEATHERS MAKE FINE BIRDS.

"Wiser it were to welcome and make ours
Whate'er of good, though small, the present brings—
Kind greetings, sunshine, song of birds and flowers,
With a child's pure delight in little things."

—R. C. TRENCH.

"MISS BRADY, papa says will you please let us off lessons at four o'clock to-day, 'cos we're going to tea at 'The Chestnuts.'"

"Very well, Effie. But this is not a half-holiday. It is a pity that you should not postpone the tea party till Saturday. Indeed, I thought your father had most wisely made a rule, that you should only accept invitations for half-holidays."

"Yes, he did. But this is to be a 'ception, 'cos Bernie's cousin is staying with him for just two days, and Lady Bentinck wants Jeanie an' me to meet her."

"Her name is Lady Dorothy Glenroy, and her father's a earl," hastily added Jeanie.

"An earl," corrected Miss Brady. "And my dear child you must learn not to speak boastfully of titled acquaintance. Such weakness is common, but it is one of the worst forms of vulgarity. Pray remember that, Jeanie."

Jeanie gave an impatient wriggle.

"You always are cross with what I say, Miss

Brady," she exclaimed. "You *always* are; an' you don't ever find fault with Effie."

The thin, ascetic face of the invalid governess softened as she looked at her favorite pupil.

"Effie is a good child," she said kindly, "and tries to do her duty."

"Of course I know you like her best," pouted Jeanie, who was in one of her least desirable moods.

"Be silent, Jeanie, and continue writing that copy."

Miss Brady spoke in a tone that Jeanie understood, a tone she had learned to obey. She took up her pen without a word.

But there was no love between the governess and this little rebellious pupil. Miss Brady had a tenderness for Effie, but with Jeanie she felt no sympathy. She was a just, impartial woman, as a rule, and she was wont to pride herself upon the fact, chiefly it may be said made up of fiction, that she showed none of the preference she felt for Effie, but treated both little sisters precisely alike. Children are, however, quick in learning the truth and in drawing crude deductions, and Jeanie knew full well that Miss Brady loved Effie and merely tolerated herself. And—for with all her faults she was an affectionate child—the knowledge hurt her considerably. She was not at her best when with Miss Brady, and the governess sometimes remarked to Dr. Allan that Jeanie possessed fine abilities but needed the strictest discipline.

At four o'clock the little girls were emancipated. They lost no time on their homeward way, and Annette greeted them at Rose Villa with clean white frocks and sun-hats, and subjected them to such brushing and tubbing as always precedes juvenile entertain-

ments. It was Annette's joy and pride to turn her little ladies out "as spick an' span as new-plucked daisies."

Jeanie and Effie needed no urging to speed them on their way to "The Chestnuts." To them that quaint, old-fashioned house, with its prim gardens and pleasant flower-bordered walks, was a veritable earthly paradise. Little Sir Bernard made a courteous and charming host, and Lady Bentinck was ready to enter into the children's amusements with as much zest as though she were herself a child. Miss Timms, too, was so kind, and seldom complained of that dreadful malady known as "bone in the leg." She played at hide-and-seek and rounders till she was breathless, and then, when the children were tired of romping, she told them wonderful stories of gnomes and fairies and mischievous sprites, till little Sir Bernard's eyes grew round with delight.

"Will you feel shy with Lady Dorothy Glenroy, d'ye think, Effie?" Jeanie asked rather solemnly.

"No, I shouldn't think so. I s'pose she is just like any other little girl," replied Effie, looking somewhat surprised.

"I wish I had a title. I wish I was called Lady Jeanie Allan."

Effie laughed.

"That sounds so funny!" she exclaimed, with a mirthful glance at her sister. "But why do you wish it, Jeanie?"

"'Cos it's grand. I should like to be grand, awf'ly."

"Papa says the humblest people may lead the grandest lives."

"What does he mean, Effie?"

"He means, I think, that to be really grand is to be good, unselfish, an' brave an' true."

"But it's so hard to be like that, Effie, 'least it is to me." And Jeanie sighed as she thought of the many good resolutions she had made on that night, a month back, when she and little Sir Bernard had nearly wept their hearts out in the gipsy's caravan far from home and friends. She had told herself then, with many tears, that if only she might return in safety to Rose Villa and the happy life there, she would never be naughty again. She would be obedient to her father and kind to good, patient, little Effie, and she would try not to pout and fidget when Miss Brady scolded. Alas! she had often forgotten those resolutions, as many an older and wiser person has forgotten his or hers, as the case may be, from time immemorial.

A servant ushered the doctor's children into a large and airy sitting room on the ground floor, that was little Sir Bernard's special sanctum. It was a pleasant room, full of flowers and pictures, and with French windows that opened into the garden. There were a great many toys in it, the huge rocking-horse that Bernard had insisted upon bringing from London, a new musical-box, larger than that which he had presented to Jeanie and Effie on the occasion of their first visit to "The Chestnuts," boxes of soldiers, and ramparts and forts and guns without number, miniature cricket bats and tennis racquets, drums with gay trappings, trains that might be wound up, so that they would fly along at express speed, emitting shrill whistles, cunningly devised poodles and pugs that could, through the pressure of machinery,

patter about and make such uncanny noises as reduced Tootsie to a state of abject terror. Books too, the most charming children's books you can imagine, prettily bound and full of delightful pictures and marvellous stories. Little Sir Bernard was a small son of fortune, and his nursery was a place of luxury and wealth, a very fairyland it seemed to simply brought-up Jeanie and Effie.

"Sir Bernard is in the garden," the servant told the little visitors as he ushered them into this cheerful room.

The low French window was pushed open by an impatient hand and the little Baronet darted into the room, letting in a flood of summer sunshine with him. He wore a holiday dress of softly-tinted blue velvet with a full waistcoat of white silk, and delicate ruffles of antique lace; Adela had brushed his thick, brown curls till they stood out like a cherub's halo about his pretty, infantile face. He might have been some dainty, tiny courtier of the days of Charles I.; his fanciful costume, which would have been ridiculous on another boy, became his fragile grace well.

He held out his hands eagerly to his little friends.

"I'm so glad you have come! I want you to help me 'muse my cousin, Dorothy. She says she thinks 'The Chestnuts' a very dull place, an' she's *awful* glad her mother's going to take her away the day after to-morrow. 'Tisn't very p'lite of her, I think."

"How old is she, Bernie? as old as Effie an' me?" asked Jeanie eagerly.

"She's nine, I think," he answered. "But she talks like a grown-up lady—a very horrid sort of grown-up lady, you know. I said 'D'you like the country?'

an' she said 'No, I don't,' so I said 'I'm s'prised!' an' she laughed—a very rude laugh—an' said, 'Course you are, 'cos you're a boy, an' boys are always silly.' Then I said, 'I don't think you're at all nice, though you are my cousin,' an' so she turned up her nose at me, so, an' we didn't talk any more for a long time."

He had scarcely finished speaking when little Lady Dorothy Glenroy stepped in at the open window. The children thought her very pretty and very smart. Her hair was the color of gold and her eyes were as blue as the little blue butterflies one sees flitting over the flowers in spring time. She wore a frock of primrose silk, simply yet perfectly made, and bronze shoes and stockings, and a great many tiny Indian silver bangles that jingled together every time she moved her arms.

"Here are Jeanie and Effie, Dorothy," said Bernard. "They have come to play with us."

Lady Dorothy smiled upon the doctor's children graciously.

"I'm sure I'm very glad to see you," she said in the languidly amiable tone in which she had heard her mother address favored visitors. "It's nice to see someone in this silly, dull place. I 'sure you I'm really quite bored."

"Let's go an' have a game at hide-an'-seek," Bernard interrupted somewhat impatiently.

"I should rather play croquet. Hide-and-seek's such a rough game," his cousin said.

So to the croquet ground the four children forthwith repaired.

"We must divide into two sides," Lady Dorothy remarked. "I shall play with the blue ball because it's the prettiest color. This little girl shall play with

me. What's your name?" And she turned to Jeanie. "Jeanie? that's rather a pretty name," she added condescendingly.

"Would you like the first stroke?" little Sir Bernard said politely.

"No, indeed. I don't want you all croqueting me? You're too kind, Bernard!"

"I didn't mean it for that. I thought you'd like it," he returned hastily.

"Silly boy! I hate boys, don't you? They're so stupid," she said turning to Effie.

"I don't think they are any more stupid than girls," Effie replied.

Lady Dorothy flung down her croquet mallet.

"I don't care to play. The sun's too hot," she said, pouting.

"Let us go an' swing then. It's nice an' shady by the swing," suggested Bernard, controlling his impatience with difficulty.

"Swings are babyish. I shan't go in one."

"Mine's not, it's a lovely swing, but we'll go without you," said little Sir Bernard, losing his temper.

"Come Jeanie and Effie."

"I will stay with your cousin, Bernie," said Jeanie, who thought Lady Dorothy, with her smart frock and her curls, and her spoiled ways, rather fascinating. "Effie will go with you."

Effie went off, nothing loath, with the little Baronet. She was not at all inclined to share her sister's infatuation.

"Let's sit under the chestnut tree and talk," Lady Dorothy said to Jeanie. "I like you. You are nicer than your sister. Your hair is pretty, and your face

is round and merry. Your sister looks at me with big solemn eyes and I know she doesn't think me nice, an' that's stupid of her. Now, don't you think I'm pretty? Most people do, you know."

Jeanie thought this a funny question, and she regarded Lady Dorothy with unfeigned surprise.

"Yes, I think you're pretty," she said, "and your frock is pretty too."

"It was made in Paris, and cost a great deal of money," Lady Dorothy remarked complacently. "All my frocks come from Paris. My father is an earl, an' he's very rich. There are three hundred windows to our house in the country, it's a huge, big house; once it was a palace, and a king lived there. It's very splendid to live in a house that was once a palace, you know."

Jeanie looked much impressed.

"It must be very nice for you," she said.

"How many windows have you got to your house?" asked Lady Dorothy.

"Well," Jeanie answered humbly. "I don't think there are many. It's quite a little house. Papa hasn't much money you see. He isn't an earl." She sighed for the smallness of Rose Villa, and the limited number of windows that adorned the red brick walls of that modest dwelling.

"That's why you wear such plain frocks, 'cos your father hasn't much money, I s'pose?" Lady Dorothy remarked with a somewhat contemptuous glance at Jeanie's simple white cotton.

Jeanie said she supposed so, and her companion continued:

"My mother spends a great deal on my clothes.

She says she likes to see me handsomely dressed. I'm glad of that, for I like pretty things. You should just see me when I'm dressed for a children's party!"

"There aren't any parties at Bumbleton!"

"No, I daresay not. It's a horrid little place. I'm thankful we don't live here. There are no shops. I couldn't spend my pocket money this week. I have a lot of pocket money, ten shillings a week. How much do you have?"

"We have a penny each—when we're good at lessons," Jeanie answered, reddening sensitively.

Lady Dorothy burst into a ringing laugh.

"A penny each!" she cried. "Well, I never heard of such a thing! I wonder you don't have a half-penny each!"

Tears of mortification sprang to Jeanie's eyes.

"It's very little, I know," she murmured. "But you—you needn't laugh, it isn't kind of you."

Lady Dorothy bent forward and kissed her impulsively.

"I 'sure you I didn't mean to be unkind," she exclaimed. "I like you, an' I hope we'll be friends. Let's talk about something else. Do you have a governess? D'you learn French, and music, and drawing, and all those lessons?"

"Yes. We have a very clever governess, but she is cross—awf'ly cross, sometimes," Jeanie confided.

"I shouldn't do lessons with her then, if I was you. When I don't like a governess, I say to mother, 'I shan't learn with that nasty person any more,' an' then mother sends her away, and I have a new one. I've had nine governesses, all counted, and six maids, a great many were cross an' a great many were stupid.

The governess I have now is nice, she lets me do everything I choose. Mother said to her 'Now, I can't hear any complaints,' an' so she never makes any."

"How nice for you!"

"Yes, I always get my own way," Lady Dorothy returned complacently. "But then," she added, "I'm a clever child, everyone says so. When I recite, all the people say, 'Oh, how lovely! What a talented little thing!' I always recite when mother gives a party."

"What's reciting?" country-bred Jeanie asked.

"Repeating poetry an' things. I can repeat a great many. The other day I recited a piece called, 'Bill Bridger's Broomstick,' an' all the ladies cried, and the gentlemen said, 'Bravo, bravo.'"

Jeanie looked upon her companion with something like awe. How brilliant she was, how clever, this pretty little girl, with her golden curls and her smart silk frock! How she, Jeanie, wished that papa was an earl, and that she and Effie wore silk frocks, and recited poems for the admiration of flattering guests. How dull and homely the quiet life at Bumbleton appeared, when contrasted with Lady Dorothy Glenroy's sparkling little career.

"Tea is ready, little ladies, if you please," Adela's voice said. "It is served over yonder under the linden trees, this evening, the weather being so mild."

Lady Dorothy jumped up from the grass.

"Are there peaches for tea, Adela?" she asked sharply. "My aunt said we might have some."

"You'd best ask Brace, my lady," Adela returned coldly. "I don't set the tea."

Lady Dorothy scowled upon her.

"If you were my maid, I'd have you sent away," she said.

"Well, I thank my stars as I ain't," Adela said with great heartiness. "For of all the troublesome children!" Her uplifted hands finished the sentence.

Happily for the public peace there were peaches for tea. Lady Dorothy demanded the ripest and best, and set them beside her plate till she should be ready to devour them, and even the infatuated Jeanie was somewhat non-plussed by this arrant piece of greediness.

While the children were having tea, under the linden trees on the lawn, waited on by Adela, and Lady Dorothy's much harassed maid, Lady Bentinck and her sister-in-law strolled out of the house on to the terrace.

"Who are those children, Muriel? I did not know that Bernard had visitors this afternoon," said Lady Glenroy, putting up her eye-glass.

"Doctor Allan's little girls. They are great friends of Bernard's."

"You let him associate with a little local practitioner's children? Surely that is unwise. Don't you fear his contracting provincialisms, and a second-rate twang? It is really very unwise."

Little Lady Bentinck laughed musically.

"There is nothing second-rate about Bernard's 'Midsummer fairies,' as he calls them. They are charming children. When they have finished tea, you shall make their acquaintance."

"I hope my Dollie will be civil to them. She is not

used to companions of that class, and she is so sharp that she will soon detect it if they are not quite up to the mark."

"She, herself, possessing such perfect manners," suggested Lady Bentinck, rather maliciously.

"Oh, I know what you mean! She doesn't hit it off with your boy. Well, they are both spoiled children, I suppose."

"The society of Dr. Allan's little people has improved Bernard in many ways. He is, though not by my means, not the spoiled child he was."

"I must say," Lady Glenroy admitted, "that I have noticed that he is less impatient and headstrong. He used to be terribly wilful, but he has always been charming, and he always will be."

Little Sir Bernard's mother smiled happily. Her boy's praises sounded sweetly in her ears. All the love that her somewhat shallow nature was capable of was given to her child.

"He is my all," she said.

Then she beckoned to Adela, who hurried across the lawn at her signal.

"Ask Sir Bernard and his little friends to join us, when they have finished tea."

"Yes, my lady."

"Muvvy wants us? We've finished. We'll go to her at once," cried the little Baronet, springing up, when Adela delivered her message.

Lady Dorothy secretly pocketed the last peach before she followed her little companions.

The children ran over the smooth grass, where the evening's shadows lay softly in the sunset light, and then up the steps and along the terrace to the two

ladies, who were seated beneath the old grey wall at the further end.

"Mother," said Lady Dorothy, pulling Jeanie forward rather unceremoniously, "this is a very nice little girl. I like her. I wish she was my sister. She wears such a plain frock because her father isn't rich, an' she only has a penny a week for pocket money."

Jeanie's face flushed painfully, and she hung back with unusual shyness at this startling introduction.

"Dorothy, you are rude! You shouldn't say such things!" exclaimed little Sir Bernard indignantly.

"Hush, hush, children. Don't squabble, I beg!" And Lady Glenroy put her white hands to her ears. "And so you like this little girl, my Dollie? That's right, darling. What is your name, my dear?"

"Jeanie, Jeanie Allan."

"A Scotch name, and a very pretty one. And the little sister? Effie? Charming too, quite charming." She looked at them through her eye-glass, with an expression of placid criticism.

"Muvvy," little Sir Bernard said persuasively, "may we all go on the lake, may we? Williams will take us, an' we'll all sit as still as—as mice, I promise."

"Yes, if Williams goes. Off already! What children!"

Lady Glenroy smiled, as she followed her sister-in-law's gaze. The children chased each other across the smooth, green sward like some bevy of happy butterflies. They unconsciously presented a delightful picture of careless young life, a picture that must have suggested limitless thought to those older denizens of modern Babylon who have minds for such thought.

"Those are pretty children," Lady Glenroy said. "And what pretty names! Effie and Jeanie. Quaint and charming. You are right, Muriel, your boy will pick up no provincialisms from them. And my Dollie is greatly taken with the one child, Jeanie—quite wonderfully so."

* * * * *

When the evening twilight wrapped the world in soft summer mists, Annette came for her little ladies.

Jeanie felt highly flattered by the affectionate farewell that little Lady Dorothy bestowed upon her. It was pleasant to her vanity to be made much of by the daughter of an earl, who, moreover, lived in a palace that had once been the home of royalty. Jeanie tip-tilted her chin as she walked homewards. Her mood and mien were alike extremely elevated. She condescended to no conversation with her sister and Annette, but they chatted happily together, and seemed unconscious of her silence, which was somewhat mortifying.

Chum rushed to the gate of Rose Villa, with yaps and barks of exuberant joy wherewith to greet his beloved little ladies, and Grip, perched on the garden wall, drew corks innumerable as his share of the welcome.

Dr. Allan was sitting in the porch with his newspaper, enjoying some rest and repose after a long, hard day's work.

"You can leave me my little people for half-an-hour, Annette," he said. "I've not seen them to-day." And Annette, with a severe expression, that said as clearly as any words, "They've stayed up too late already," marched through into the house.

Effie climbed on to her father's knee, and Jeanie sat down beside him, and Chum came and stood in front of them and wagged his tail vigorously, evidently with the desire of proclaiming sentiments of general benevolence.

"Have you had a happy afternoon at 'The Chestnuts,' my bairnies?" the doctor said.

"Ye-es," Effie answered, "tho' not so nice as usual."

"Not so nice as usual?"

"Much nicer, *I* should say." This very decidedly from Jeanie.

"I think Jeanie likes her, papa."

"She's very friendly to me, an' her father's a—that is *an* earl, an' she is very grand and rich, and clever too."

"Of whom are you speaking, little women?" Dr. Allan looked at once puzzled and amused.

"Lady Dorothy Glenroy, papa. Lady Bentinck's little niece, you know," Jeanie hastily explained.

"Oh, I see. And your opinions about her differ—eh?" The doctor looked from one to the other of the pretty, earnest little faces.

"She's rude an' greedy."

"She wore a primrose silk frock, and her curls are like gold."

"You like her because her father's an earl, and because she wears a silk frock. Is that what I am to understand, Jeanie? My little girl, I'm sorry. I thought you had learned to look upon life from a different, a higher standpoint."

Jeanie hung her head, and was silent.

"I—I don't think Jeanie really meant it—what she said—like that," Effie cried eagerly.

Jeanie looked up.

"I should like to be rich," she said doggedly. "P'raps it's wrong of me an'—an' discontented, but I should like it all the same."

A pained look came into her father's thin, sensitive face, but he did not speak. Effie put her arm round his neck and kissed him. Then they all sat in silence for a few moments, a silence which was broken by Annette summoning the children to bed. The children needed no second bidding that night, they wished their father good-night, and went away very quietly. They talked so little while preparing for bed, that Annette said as she departed with the lamp:

"You'll not want rocking this night, I'm thinking, little ladies. You're fairly tired out."

Below, in the dusky garden, the little doctor stood leaning against the painted wooden gate, a grave and almost despondent look on his pale, ascetic face. He was wondering whether he had made a mistake. He was doubting his wisdom, in accepting Lady Bentinck's hospitality for his little girls. At "The Chestnuts" Jeanie and Effie met children their superiors in rank and education, children who enjoyed such luxuries and advantages as he could not afford to give them. This new mood of impulsive Jeanie's was a revelation. It showed him things in a new and less pleasant light. If his little girls were to learn lessons of discontent and worldliness from these associations, it would be better to cut them adrift from them at once. Jeanie's pouting face and her rebellious words, "I should like to be rich," haunted him. He had hoped that his children entertained higher and better ambitions. Riches! Rank! how lightly *she* had thought of such

empty titles, that gentle young mother, whose love her little daughters had no remembrance of. Ah had she been spared !

He sighed, and passed his hand over his tired face, then looked upwards at the quiet evening sky, all alight with the angels' lamps, the stars.

"Poor little Jeanie!" he said, very gently. "Poor little one! I mustn't be hard on her. It's my fault, I daresay. I don't understand my children as their mother would."

He turned into the house then, and went upstairs to the children's room with some vague idea that Jeanie, in her present mood, might be restless and wakeful, with some half-defined thought that she might need comfort and help. But the little sisters were sleeping peacefully, the moonlight falling softly in silver strands across the small white beds, and Jeanie's round, rosy face wore the simply happy look of sleeping innocence. On the wall, above the children, was hung an illuminated text in a frame. Mechanically, the doctor read it:

"And he shall give his angels charge over thee."

Here was the reassuring answer to his perplexed questions. He left that quiet room happier, comforted.

CHAPTER XVI.

" I LOVE HOME BEST ! "

" Titania's wand ! 'tis left us still,
For mortals all to use it ;
It works for us its magic will,
And never more shall lose it !

* * * * *

" For love has all the power of old
To wand of fairy given ;
It turns the dross of life to gold,
And makes this world a heaven ! "

—CLIFTON BINGHAM.

On the following morning Dr. Allan received, at breakfast time, a note from Lady Bentinck, inviting Jeanie and Effie to join her party in an excursion to the neighboring town of Chichester.

" There is a circus there just now," little Sir Bernard's mother wrote, " and my boy and his cousin are eager to see it. You will add greatly to their pleasure by permitting your children to accompany them. We wish to start at eleven o'clock, so may I beg for a whole holiday for Effie and Jeanie ? "

Dr. Allan glanced half wistfully at the eager faces of his little girls and decided to let them go.

" And we're to have a whole holiday ? Hooray ! papa, you're a darling ! " and Jeanie bestowed upon him an affectionate hug.

" Can't you come, too, papa dear ? " Effie asked, slipping her hand into his.

"Too busy, little one. My poor people couldn't spare me."

"Here is your pen, papa, and a sheet of paper. Will you answer Lady Bentinck's note at once, for fear she should think we're not going?"

"Very well, Jeanie."

"Wait till papa's had his breakfast!" Effie exclaimed, with a reproachful glance at her sister.

"Of course. I forgot," said Jeanie, hurriedly, and her face flushed deeply. "I—d didn't mean to be selfish."

Her father did not seem to hear her. He had pushed aside his untasted breakfast, and was writing the note of acceptance.

* * * * *

The sky was rosy with sunset, and the golden glamor of parting day—a summer's day—lay upon dewy meadows and verdant pasture lands. The quaint lattice windows of "The Chestnuts" reflected ruddily the sunset fires, and the swallows skimmed over the lake upon whose calm bosom the yellow water-lilies lay.

Lady Bentinck and her boy strolled down the terrace-walk by the old grey wall, and watched the sunset light fade in the lovely evening sky, and the white-winged pigeons daintily skimming about the high chimneys of the ancient house.

"It has been a happy day," the little Baronet said, contentedly. "An' Effie an' Jeanie *did* enjoy the circus. They had never seen one before, you know, muvvy. Dorothy was nicer too than she generally is. She likes Jeanie. She says she wishes she was her own sister, an' always lived with her. I 'spect, tho',"

he added, wisely, "that she'd soon get tired of her; she always gets tired of everything after a short while."

"Dorothy is becoming too spoiled," Lady Bentinck remarked severely. "Her manners are odious, and she boasts of her wealth and rank like the child of some rich parvenu. I wonder your aunt allows it. It's simply execrable form."

"Oh, here's Adela! Not my bedtime is it, truly, Adela? Bother! But, yes, I will go at once. I'm trying not to be a spoiled child, you see, muvvy. Dr. Allan says all manly boys are obedient, an' most specially if they want to be soldiers when they grow up. I'm rather un'cided 'tween soldiery an' organ playin', for a—a perfession, but any way, I'll practice being obedient. So, good-night, muvvy dear."

"You dear, funny little boy!" And Lady Bentinck laughed in her musical, careless fashion, as she bent to kiss the earnest face raised to hers.

"Don't laugh, muvvy," little Sir Bernard said. "I'm awful serious, I do 'sure you. I really do try, now, not to get angry, an' shout an' stamp like I used, when I couldn't get my own way. I don't even call Adela names when she pulls my curls when she's brushing them, do I, Adela? There you see, muvvy, Adela tells you so."

"Saintly forbearance! Don't develop into a hero, that's all, Bernie. I shouldn't know what to do with a hero son!"

"You're laughing still, muvvy! Well, never mind, good-night," and the little Baronet went off with Adela, "as good as gold," as that handmaiden would have said.

Lady Dorothy and her wearied-looking attendant were having an altercation in the corridor.

"I'm not a bit sleepy, and I don't want to go to bed," Lady Dorothy said.

"Your mamma's orders must be obeyed, Lady Dollie, an' her Ladyship said most decided as you was to go at once."

"You are a horrid old thing, Benson, and I hate you! Go away!" And Benson received a vigorous push that sent her flying, while her troublesome charge retreated to the further end of the corridor and hung out of a window to the imminent peril of her neck.

"There! Now whatever is a poor, much-trying woman to do?" Benson said, appealing to Adela, who was following little Sir Bernard upstairs.

"I should leave," Adela replied promptly.

"I think I shall pretty soon," Benson said. "If I stays with this child much longer, I'll be worried into my grave, there's no doubting that."

"Come and look at these funny little lights on the garden-path, Bernard," cried his cousin. "I really think they must be stars tumbled down from the sky. No, Benson, get away! I'll not go to bed till I've found out what these lights are."

"They're glow-worms," said little Sir Bernard, peeping out of the window. "Glow-worms carryin' the fairies' lamps. They're the fairies' link-men, you know, an' light them to the carriages when they go to a evenin' party. Effie an' I 'cided that when we was lookin' at them the other night."

"Carriages? What are fairy carriages made of?" Lady Dorothy asked curiously.

"The fairies ride in little palanquins that the bees an' the cockchafers an' the butterflies carry on their backs. I read that in a fairy book."

"I don't believe any of it. Fairies are just nonsense made up to amuse babies."

"Dr. Allan isn't a baby, I s'pose?"

"Does he believe in them?"

"Why yes, *in course*."

"Sir Bernard!"

"Yes, Adela, I'm comin'. Good-night, Dorothy."

"Good-night. I say, Bernard, come here, and I'll tell you a secret, a splendid secret. Bend your head, I want to whisper in your ear. That's it. What d'you think?" and Lady Dorothy spoke in a mysterious whisper. "Mother's going to adopt Jeanie for a companion for me, an' she's coming to live with me always, and we shall do lessons together, and play together, an' she'll amuse me so I'll never feel dull."

"Have you asked her yet?" the little boy inquired incredulously.

"No, but of course she'll come, 'twill be a great 'vantage for her, mother says, and she will have a very much grander home with us than she's got at poky little Rose Villa."

Lady Dorothy's tone was scathing when she spoke of Dr. Allan's modest dwelling.

"Well," little Sir Bernard said, in his frank, decided way, "I feel certain sure that Jeanie won't come."

* * * * *

"Jeanie," said Dr. Allan, coming into the dining room of Rose Villa, where he found his little girls preparing their lessons for the next day. "Put on your hat, my child. I'm going to take you to 'The

Chestnuts;' Lady Glenroy wants to speak to you. She and Lady Dorothy leave Bumbleton to-morrow morning, and she has something to say to you before she goes."

Effie and Jeanie looked up in surprise from their books.

"How funny!" Jeanie exclaimed. "We've been with Lady Glenroy all day at Chichester, you know, papa. I wonder why she couldn't say what she wanted to, then."

"I 'spect Dorothy has a parting present for you, Jeanie," said her sister. "I'm sure she likes you very much."

Jeanie clapped her hands.

"Delightful!" she cried, "I do hope it's something nice. I should like bangles best, jingling Indian bangles, just like Dorothy's."

"Fetch your hat quickly, little Chatterbox. It is late, nearly eight o'clock. If Annette catches you she will bundle you off to bed pretty sharply, and I shall never venture to interfere."

Jeanie babbled on merrily as she walked with her father to "The Chestnuts." She had thoroughly enjoyed the little outing to Chichester, and the marvellous equestrian feats that had fairly dazzled her country eyes at the traveling circus. She was in one of her brightest moods, and the eager, laughing little face that was raised to Dr. Allan's, made him wonder less and less at the letter he had just received from Lady Glenroy. His own face was pale and grave, but Jeanie had no time to notice that. She was not a particularly observant child at any time, and on this occasion her thoughts were wholly pre-occupied.

When a servant opened the great old-fashioned oak door at "The Chestnuts," Dr. Allan said :

"I shall leave you now, my Jeanie. It will be better for Lady Glenroy to see you alone. I will call for you in half-an-hour."

Jeanie looked round in surprise only to find that he was already gone. Full of wonder and not a little puzzled, she followed the servant into the drawing-room.

Lady Glenroy was sitting on a sofa in the window. She was the sole occupant of the room.

"Oh, there you are, child," she said, when Jeanie came in. "Come and speak to me."

The little girl approached rather timidly and uncertainly. What could all this mean? she asked herself.

Lady Glenroy liked to save herself all possible trouble, and so, without any fencing or preliminary remarks, she went straight to her point at once.

"Jeanie," she said, "my little daughter has taken a great fancy to you. She is an only child, and her life would be a happier one if she had a companion of her own age. Would you like to be that companion? You are old enough, my dear, to understand that if you come to live with Dorothy, you will enjoy such luxuries and advantages as your worthy father can never afford to give you. You will have first-rate teachers. You will have a pony of your own, and pretty frocks such as my Dollie wears. You will share her suite of rooms and be waited on by her maid, and I shall give you weekly pocket money, which you may spend as you please. This is a great chance for a simple little country girl, Jeanie, a greater chance than a child like you can realize, and I do not suppose you will hesitate to avail yourself of it."

Lady Glenroy concluded her remarks somewhat grandiloquently. She felt that she was about to confer an immense benefit upon Jeanie, and that it was well that the child should realize this.

"It will be a wonderful thing for you," she told her. Her tone was simply complacent, and she unfurled her huge ostrich-feather fan with the air of one who has arranged a plan and may now dismiss it.

Jeanie's pretty little face flushed deeply. The prospect was a dazzling one to the little country-bred girl. To share the advantages and the luxuries of such a dainty small personage as Lady Dorothy Glenroy, to be clad in lovely frocks from Paris, and possess unlimited pocket money, and live in a palace that had once been the home of a king! Jeanie had a decided weakness for pretty things, and wealth, and grandeur, a weakness simple-minded Effie could not understand.

"I—it—it's very kind of you," she faltered.

Lady Glenroy laid her hand kindly on her shoulder.

"You shall be my second little daughter," she said.

"You and my Dollie will share alike in all things. You'll be very happy I'm sure."

"Yes," Jeanie answered, "thank you. Only there's papa an' Effie." Her voice dropped.

"You will soon forget the parting. Besides, one day you shall come and see them. And now, my child, go home and think it over, and then in the morning let me have a little note, just yes or no. Hush! I will take no answer to-night. You can arrive at no wise decision so rapidly. Good-night, my dear." She stooped and kissed her. "You must come to us. My Dollie is longing to have you."

Jeanie did not wait for her father, but ran home alone through the dusky, sleepy village, where the light flickered out ruddily from open cottage doorways, and fell on cobbled paths edged with sweet, old-fashioned flowers.

The child's mind was filled with a tumult of thought. She was infatuated by the prospect laid before her in Lady Glenroy's brilliant offer. A vision of pretty frocks and unlimited pocket money, and a home in a palace where a king had once lived, rose before Jeanie's mental vision, and the little simple country girl caught her breath wonderingly. She was very young, only ten years old, and the margin of her little life had been bounded always by the narrow limits of Rose Villa. The possibilities suggested by the change to Lady Dorothy's home were great and wonderful in Jeanie's estimation.

Toys and books like little Sir Bernard's, a pony of her own! These things meant a great deal to Jeanie, or so she thought. She had not learned yet the secret of life, that rank and wealth can never give happiness nor the loss of them take it away, but that it is an inborn gift that may only blossom in the sunshine of God's smile.

Dr. Allan and Effie were in the garden of Rose Villa, strolling about hand in hand in the twilight. Patters was perched on Effie's shoulder, and Chum followed her jealously, his keen eyes fixed on the queer figure of the little monkey. Grip, the raven, hopped along the path, drawing corks innumerable, and Jacko, perched on the top of his cage in the drawing-room window, mocked him hoarsely.

Jeanie lifted the latch of the little green-painted

garden gate and went quickly in. Her pretty face was flushed and excited.

"Do you know, papa? Do you know Lady Glenroy's plan?" she asked breathlessly, as her father and Effie turned to meet her.

"Yes, my dear," he answered quietly. "Lady Glenroy asked my permission to speak to you. Your decision is in your own hands, Jeanie, I am going to let you choose."

"Then I think I'll go, papa," the little girl said quickly. "I should have a great many 'vantages, you know. Lady Glenroy says I shall be treated just like Dorothy, and I'm to have a pony of my own, and frocks from Paris and heaps of pocket money an'—an'—but," she broke off suddenly, her eager face clouding over, "I do wish, papa, that you an' Effie were coming too—an' Chum an' Patters, an' all the other pets. I'll miss them; I even think I'll miss Annette an' Miss Brady a little."

Dr. Allan looked at her earnestly, but he did not speak. Effie turned her face away to hide the tears that would, despite her best efforts, spring to her eyes.

"If Jeanie wants to go," Effie thought, "I wouldn't like to say a word to stop her, but if it was me that Lady Glenroy had asked, I'd say no at once. I'd rather stay with papa an' Jeanie, even if we lived in a hovel instead of in dear little Rose Villa." These were Effie's thoughts, but then Effie didn't care a bit for smart frocks and fine ways; she was a little home bird, who loved the nest, and had no wish to try the strength of her wings, no wish to fly away and see the world.

"But what'll Effie do without me?" Jeanie said. "You'll miss me at lessons, an' at play, too, won't you, Effie? An' it will seem queer to me to be without you," she added with rather a suspicious quiver in her voice.

"I shall have papa," Effie answered, trying to speak cheerfully. "Papa an' me will have one another. But, of course, I'll miss you, Jeanie; I must, you see, 'cos you an' me have been together always." Effie stopped suddenly. She could trust her voice to say no more.

"Is it selfish of me to go, papa?" Jeanie asked abruptly.

"I should scarcely call it selfish," he replied gravely. "My dear little girl, as I have already told you, I want you to do as you like in this thing. You are old enough, Jeanie, to be able to choose."

"It will be a good change for me, Lady Glenroy says, I'll have a great many 'vantages that—that——" Jeanie stopped somewhat embarrassed.

Dr. Allan quietly finished her sentence for her.

"That I could not afford to give you. Yes, my dear, that is so."

"I'm to let Lady Glenroy know early in the morning, before she goes away," the little girl said. Then suddenly added, "I think I'll go, papa."

"Bedtime, little ladies, and past by a good deal."

This was Annette's interruption, and as Dr. Allan put in no plea for them, the children were forced to obey the summons. Both little girls looked subdued and serious when they bade their father good-night, and Effie's blue eyes were rather tearful.

"Circus-seeing don't suit you, I'm thinking," An-

nette remarked as she brushed out Jeanie's curls. "You *are* silent to-night."

"Annette," said Jeanie suddenly, "Lady Glenroy has 'vited me to go and live with her little girl—Lady Dorothy, you know. I'm to have a pony of my own, and heaps of toys an' books like little Sir Bernard's, and frocks from Paris and a great deal of pocket money, an' all sorts of grand things. Papa says I may go if I like, and I think, Annette, I shall 'cide to go."

"You'll never leave your pa and Miss Effie for a pack of strangers, Miss Jeanie!" Annette held up her hands in astonishment.

"You don't know what you're talking about, Annette," Jeanie returned crossly. "Papa's glad for me to go. I shall have a great many 'vantages he can't give me. He says so himself."

"Oh, indeed! Well, Miss Jeanie, no one could say as you're a pattern, an' at times you are that worritin' that I loses all patience with you, but I did think as you was an affectionate child!"

"You are stupid! You don't understand!" Jeanie's face flushed crimson and tears started to her eyes.

Annette said no more, but the grim expression of her buxom countenance spoke volumes, and Jeanie felt that there was scorn in her voice when she bade her good-night. Jeanie was not happy, although she tried to think she was. When she thought of parting from her father and Effie her eyes grew dim, and a lump rose in her throat, and under these circumstances the prospect of a life of wealth and ease was less fair to behold. Long after Effie had cried herself to sleep with the corners of the *douvie* stuffed into her mouth

to muffle her sobs from her sister, Jeanie lay awake thinking.

* * * * *

Lady Bentinck and little Sir Bernard and their guests were partaking of breakfast in the rose-hung verandah of the "The Chestnuts" on the following morning when a servant brought a note to Lady Glenroy.

She opened it quickly, ran her eyes over the sheet, and passed it to her sister-in-law.

"The child's an idiot," was her curt comment as she did so.

"The child? Oh, this is from Jeanie Allan, I see."

Lady Bentinck carefully read the note, which was written in a firm, round, childish hand, and ran thus:

"DEAR LADY GLENROY,

"Thank you very much for asking me to go and live with you and Dorothy. It was very kind of you. I feel very grateful. I wish I could thank you more nicely, but I am writing this all by myself, so I am afraid I can't put it any better. Thank you again, but I think I'd rather stay at home with papa and Effie, please, because I love them very much.

"Your little friend,

"JEANIE."

"The child is right, I think," Lady Bentinck remarked.

Lady Glenroy made no reply. She looked decidedly unamiable. That Jeanie should decline her magnanimous offer was a possibility that had never occurred to her. She was surprised and offended. Half-an-hour later she took her departure, accompanied by her

little daughter, and Jeanie Allan never saw either of them again. It may be added too that the child never regretted her irrevocable decision. Her heart told her that love, the happy love of a united home circle, is worth ten thousand times more than all the wealth and grandeur in the world.

* * * * *

Dr. Allan was standing in the porch of Rose Villa, looking over the morning paper before breakfast, and Effie was brushing Chum in the little piece of front garden when Jeanie darted downstairs, two steps at a time, and rushed upon her father.

"Papa," she cried, bestowing upon him an affectionate hug that almost took away the little doctor's breath; "I've done it. I've written my 'cision to Lady Glenroy."

Effie emancipated the struggling Chum, and looked up eagerly, the dog's brush in her hand. Chum scuttled off joyfully into the sunlight.

"I've quite 'cided, papa," cried Jeanie, whose bright face was simply wreathed with smiles. "And I'm awful glad I have. I'm not going to Lady Glenroy. The pony would have been nice, an' so would the Paris frocks, 'cos I can't help liking pretty things an' I—I'm afraid I wish to be grand and rich. But, papa, I love you an' Effie, an' our little home best, I do, indeed, an' indeed, I do!"

"O Jeanie!" cried Effie. "I'm so glad, so glad!" And the little sisters ran into each other's arms.

"I love home best!" Those words sounded very sweetly in Dr. Allan's ears.

CHAPTER XVII.

SUMMER ROSES.

"Live all thy sweet life through
Sweet rose, dew-sprent,
Drop down thine evening dew
To gather it anew
When day is bright.
I fancy thou wast meant
Chiefly to give delight."

—CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

SUMMER days fly by as on the wings of the wind when all the world is young, and to little Sir Bernard those sunlit hours "in the country" seemed all too short. Hay-making was over, and many of the sweetest wild flowers, the honeysuckle, and the convolvulus, and the snow-white meadow-sweet, and the delicate marguerites, those dainty field daisies, had blossomed and faded in quiet, grassy ways. But it was the time of the roses, and the quaint, old-fashioned gardens of "The Chestnuts" were fragrant with the matchless perfume of the queen of flowers.

"A happier smile illumines each brow,
With quicker spread each heart uncloses,
And all is happiness, for now
The valley holds its Feast of Roses."

Little Sir Bernard admired them very much, these lovely roses, the soft *bal de neige*, the deep rich damask, the delicate pink *la France*, and the pale yellow blossoms, the fantastic names of which he could

never remember. He had seen them before, set in costly vases in the reception rooms of his mother's house in Grosvenor Place, but they seemed different growing here in this delightful old garden, fresher and sweeter, the little boy thought; and one might fancy, too, that some of those unkind fairy sprites who would never let him see their beauty, were hidden away among the dewy velvet leaves.

Little Sir Bernard did not care to pick the roses.

"It's so nice to see them growin'," he said to the doctor's children. "An' they live longer on their stems, I think. Besides, I'm sure they feel happier in this pretty garden than they would in the house; it's their home, you see!"

"I've just learned a piece of poetry about the roses," Effie remarked. "It's pretty. It is called a legend, Miss Brady says; I don't know what that word means z'actly."

"Tell it me," the little Baronet said. "I like poetry. It seems as if it belongs to the country, somehow, though I can't 'splain why," he added thoughtfully.

"Papa says it's the voice of Nature. I'm not sure I can remember those verses, Bernie, but I'll try, if you like."

"Yes, do try. It don't sig'urfy if you don't 'member them, you know, 'cos I'm not Miss Brady. I shan't be cross."

"O Bernie, Miss Brady's not cross!" Effie exclaimed.

"Isn't she? Jeanie says she is."

"Oh! Well, never mind. I'll say the verses now. They are called a 'Legend of Roses.'"

"That sounds pretty. Now begin. I'm listenin' hard."

"It's a sort of hymn, I think," Effie said reverently.
"You ought to take off your hat, Bernie."

The little boy pulled off his wide-brimmed straw, and threw it down upon the grass by his side. Effie stood up, and clasped her hands behind her, as she was wont to do when repeating a lesson to her invalid teacher. The two children, with their curly heads and fresh innocent faces, the clustering rose-bushes, the summer sunshine, and the clear, blue sky above, would have furnished a subject for a pretty picture. What could be more charming than the verdant grace of perfect summer, and the unconscious beauty of childhood?

It was a pretty legend that the little girl repeated, pretty, and quaint, and rare.

"The young child, Jesus, had a garden,
Full of June roses, rare and red,
And thrice a day he watered them,
To make a garland for his head.

When they were full blown in the garden,
He called the Jewish children there,
And each did pluck himself a rose,
Until they stripped the garden bare.

'And now how will you make your garland?
For not a rose your plot adorns,'
'But you forget,' he answered them,
'That you have left me still the thorns.'

They took the thorns and made a garland,
And placed it on his shining head;
And where the roses should have shown,
Were little drops of blood instead."

* * * * *

"Bernard," Lady Bentinck said, looking up from a letter she had been reading, "your uncle is returning home. We shall have to abdicate in his favor. Our stay at 'The Chestnuts' must come to an abrupt end. And, to tell you the truth," she added, smiling, "I'm not sorry. Cabbages and cows are charming, but one may see too much of them, you know, *mon cher*."

Little Sir Bernard tossed back his curls in an impatient way he had, and frowned portentously.

"I don't want to go," he cried. "I love the country and I hate London; an'—an', muvvy, you promised me you'd stay here till the roses were over, and it wasn't summer any more."

"But Uncle Arthur wants his house, *cheri*. You must remember, Bernie, he has lent it to us for quite seven or eight weeks. He says that he will be delighted if we will stay on, but I could not trespass longer on his kindness. Still, we shall not return to town. The season is over, and all my friends will have left. We'll go to the sea, Bernie. You like the sea, dearest, you know."

"You'll be able to dig in the sands, and go out in a boat, and ride on donkeys," added Miss Timms.

"It's dull diggin' on the sands all alone, an'—an' I don't think I like boats, an' I'm too big now to ride donkeys. No, I won't have any more breakfast, thank you. I feel very *down*. I love Bumbleton, an' I'd like to stay here always. It's horrid to leave Jeanie and Effie, an' Doctor Allan, and Chum, an' dear little Rose Villa."

"Well really, darling, I'm sorry for you to be vexed, but it can't be helped, and I daresay it's charming at the sea now."

Little Sir Bernard did not find this philosophy consoling. They were breakfasting in the verandah, and as soon as the meal was over he stole away into the garden to think things over among the roses. Presently Adela found him out, and suggested the advisability of a walk before the heat of the day, but he sent her away rather crossly, and flatly declined to take any exercise.

Adela went to Miss Timms.

"Sir Bernard won't do nothing but sit all alone in the garding, miss, and he looks very white, and as if he'd been crying," she said. "I don't know what's upset him, I'm sure."

Miss Timms knew, and she said she would go and talk to him. She put on her wide-brimmed mushroom hat, and tripped across the lawn to where the little boy lay under a tall acacia tree. He turned his head sharply at the approaching footfall.

"Oh! I thought p'raps it was Jeanie an' Effie," he said disappointedly, when he saw Miss Timms.

"Would you like them to come, my dear?" she asked gently.

"No, it don't sig'urfy, I'm going to tea at Rose Villa this afternoon. Sit down aside me, Timmy, I want to talk to you. Timmy, I've thought of a plan. I want muvvy to ask Jennie and Effie to come to the seaside with us. They've never seen the sea. I think they'd like to come. D'you call it a good plan, Timmy?"

The little boy looked so eager, that Miss Timms could only say, "You must ask your mother, my dear."

"I'll go an' ask her this very minute," he said, jumping up.

But Miss Timms said that Lady Bentinck had just started for a drive.

Little Sir Bernard's face clouded over at this information, and he bit his lip to check the impatient words that rose on his tongue. Dr. Allan had told him that manly boys don't fly into tempers and say rude, passionate things when they are displeased; he had said, "A little gentleman must learn self-control," and the boy thought much of Dr. Allan's opinions; he had learned to love and respect Jeanie and Effie's kind father.

So he only said quite quietly, "I hope she'll be home soon."

"She will be home to luncheon, I've no doubt," Miss Timms answered, fully conscious of the little struggle that had taken place in the mind of the impetuous, wilful child. "And now, my dear, I'm going over to Ford's Green to take old Mrs. Fleet a milk pudding and some other things. Will you come with me?"

"I'd like to," little Sir Bernard said readily, "and I'll take her some of the bon-bons that Cousin Dorothy sent me, shall I?"

But Miss Timms was doubtful as to whether Mrs. Fleet would appreciate these delicacies, and said she thought she would derive more pleasure from a bunch of flowers.

"You might pick a handful, while I go and put on my cloak," she said, "and then we will start off, my dear."

Mrs. Fleet was not a stranger to Bernard. Dr. Allan had called Lady Bentinck's attention to the poor old woman, who was one of the many humble patients he attended for pure charity, and when Miss Timms

went to her as an emissary, carrying beef tea and milk puddings from "The Chestnuts," the little Baronet not infrequently accompanied her. He felt very sorry for the poor old soul who sat propped up on pillows in her chair by the fire, day after day, and who could never get out to enjoy the soft summer breezes and the pleasant fragrance of the summer flowers. The brusque, almost harsh, manner of the daughter with whom she lived, and who very grudgingly gave her a home, moved him to indignation, and once he said quite fiercely to Miss Timms :

"Mrs. Fleet's daughter is *horrid*. She's so unkind to her poor old mother. I should like to hate her if it wasn't wicked to hate peoples."

With all his impetuosity and wilfulness, he had a tender little heart, and a great wide sympathy for poor, helpless things. Once he set upon and beat a village lad, twice his size, who was ill-using a dog, and when Adela, overcome by his flushed and dishevelled appearance after the fray, exclaimed that he was all over mud, and that he was naughty, really naughty, he answered her proudly, and pulling up his straight little figure with loftiness :

"No, Adela, I wasn't naughty, I was just. That cruel boy hurt the poor little dog, an' I punished him."

Miss Timms and little Sir Bernard found Mrs. Fleet alone. She was sitting in her usual place, propped up with pillows in her chair by the open hearth, where a log of wood smouldered slowly, emitting a pleasant fragrance of pine. Albeit old and ill, she was a pleasant-looking old woman, very neat and clean, and with a mild, gentle face, that Bernard liked to look at.

"I'm main glad to see you," she said, when she had thanked Miss Timms for the good things she brought. "My daughter's gone away for the day—to market, an' I'm alone—not that I minds bein' alone, I've a deal to think of and the memory o' old times seems company. I sees faces round the fire when I'm alone, shadows o' faces that I'll never see the substance of again, this side the grave."

"Dr. Allan tells us—" Miss Timms began, then she stopped suddenly with an embarrassed look.

Old Mrs. Fleet took up the thread of her sentence with a smile.

"As I'm a movin' my home," she said quietly. "Aye, that's true enough. My daughter can't keep me here no longer, her children's growin' up, and the house is none too large for 'em. She wants my bit o' a room, under the roof, an' my place by the fire. So I'm goin'—to the House. There was a day when I said as I hoped I'd not live to go into the Poor House, but I feels different now, I don't seem to care, an', lady, it seems to me as it won't be fur long."

"I'm so sorry, so sorry," Miss Timms exclaimed, really distressed.

"You're kind, lady; you always are I know; but don't take on about me. I has to leave my home, but I think that won't be fur long. I'm old, an' my days are nigh spent. I've lived in this house ever sin' I married, 'tis nigh on sixty year now; my children was born here, an' by this hearth my old man passed away ten years ago come Christmas. But—well, 'tis time I goes. There be younger folk wantin' of my place."

Little Sir Bernard sat on the opposite side of the

hearth, looking at the old woman with big, solemn eyes. Suddenly he got up and went across to her and kissed her wrinkled face.

"If you was my mother," he said, quickly, "I'd let you stay here always. I'd *like* for you to stay here always."

"Bless your dear heart, my lamb, I'm sure you would!" she cried, tears springing to her eyes. "You're a good, kind little gentleman. May God keep your heart kind!"

"I will tell your daughter that she's *not* to send you away," Bernard declared in his most determined manner.

Old Mrs. Fleet smiled.

"I don't want to stay, my dear, when they're wantin' to get rid o' me. An' 'tain't fur long. I'll have a home o' my own again, soon—in heaven. It says in the Bible as everyone will have a home there—everyone as believes in the Lord Jesus. D'you call to mind them verses, little master? They comforts me often. 'In my Father's house are many mansions, * * * I go to prepare a place for you.' Jesus promised that. I thinks o' the promise often. When I wakes up i' the night, I sez it over to myself 'many mansions,' homes fur all o' us, even the poorest."

Little Sir Bernard listened with grave attention.

"That's true," he said, when the old woman ceased speaking. "Quite true. Dr. Allan told it to us—to Jeanie an' Effie an' me—when the angels fetched Mr. Pat away. Mr. Pat was very tired an' he hadn't no home, poor thing, an' he was very old an' his bones ached. But he asked Jesus to forgive him, and to give him 'Calm and sweet repose,' an' Dr. Allan said

he'd have a happy home in heaven, for God makes all who trust in the Lord Jesus quite—quite—well, an' happy for ever."

The sunshine, slanting in at the open casement, fell on the earnest, beautiful little face of the speaker, and old Mrs. Fleet caught her breath when she looked at him.

"He's fur all the world like the picters o' the angels—them as they calls cherubs—in the winder at church," she said to Miss Timms.

Bernard did not hear her, he was fully engrossed by his subject.

"It's a long way up to heaven," he said, thoughtfully. "Mr. Pat thought he'd never get there, 'cos it was so high, right above the sky an' the stars; but the angels fetched him, an' their wings are strong."

* * * * *

Little Sir Bernard was rather grave, as he walked homeward with Miss Timms.

"I'm thinkin'," he said, when she asked him why he was so unusually quiet—"I'm thinkin' how that there's a lot of sad things in the world."

"Not for you, Bernard, your little life is all sunshine, my dear."

"But still I can't forget the poor peoples who aren't happy, the peoples that have sorrows an' troubles, an' when I think of them I feel sad."

"When you are a man, you will be rich and powerful, darling. You may help them. I think you will."

"I shall, I shall," he said eagerly. "I'm goin' to ask God to make me grow up quick, so's I may help them,—those poor things—d'reckly."

"Come now, and sit in the garden until luncheon-

time, and I will tell you a story—a story about your favorite fairies,” said Miss Timms. She thought that the troubles of poor Mrs. Fleet had made too deep an impression upon the sensitive, childish mind, and she hastened to divert his attention into other and less sombre channels.

Bernard’s face brightened perceptibly.

“I love to hear about the fairies,” he exclaimed. “We’ll go out ’mong the roses, where there’s shade from the acacia tree. I shall shut my eyes while you tell the story, Timmy dear, so’s I can fancy that the fairies are flittin’ round.”



ERNEST.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A GLIMPSE OF FAIRYLAND.

"Ah! what a power has white simplicity!"

—KEATS.

"Love's best guide, and friendship's stay,

Trust to innocence was given;

'Tis doubt that paves the downward way,

But trust unlocks the gates of heaven."

—G. P. R. JAMES.

"ERNEST was a little boy of seven years old—just your age, Bernard, my dear. He lived on a far-away wild hillside, with his father and mother, and half-a-dozen small brothers and sisters. His father was a wood-cutter, hard-working, but poor. Often, in winter time, Ernest knew what it was to want a meal; and night after night the little fellow lay awake, crying silently, from the cruel cold that numbed his limbs

and made his teeth chatter in his head. The other children attended a village school, some four miles away, at the base of the hill; but Ernest was not a strong child, and the walk was considered too long for him, so he stayed at home and helped his mother by minding the baby, and washing the plates and dishes. He was quick and handy, and in these ways he managed to make himself very useful. Sometimes he wished that he was strong and well, like the other children, and might so go with them to school, and share their work and play, but not very often; he was a contented, good little boy, and so long as he might 'help mother,' he was happy.

"One summer morning, when he was sitting under a hedge, not far from his father's tiny cottage, taking care of the baby, who lay across his knees, wrapped in a shabby old red shawl, a rare thing happened, a stranger appeared.

"The stranger was a pretty young lady, in a white frock and a wide-brimmed straw hat. She looked eagerly at Ernest and the baby, who, to tell the truth, were as quaint and picturesque a little pair as one might wish to meet with on a summer's morning.

"'Sit quite still, little boy,' she said quickly. 'Just as you are, with the baby—so. I'm going to sketch you.'

"'If you please, miss,' he said solemnly, 'will it hurt? I'd rather you didn't go for to sketch us, miss, if it hurts.'

She broke into a merry, reassuring laugh. 'No, it won't hurt. I'm going to draw a picture of you, little boy, d' you see? Now, keep quite still, and you shall be rewarded.'

"She pulled a sketch-book from her pocket as she spoke, and seated herself upon a felled tree, facing Ernest and the baby. Her facile pencil moved rapidly and decisively over the sheet of paper; she glanced from time to time, critically, comprehensively, at the little picturesque children who had caught her fancy.

"In half-an-hour, or perhaps less, the sketch—a pencil outline—was complete. She showed it to Ernest, and his eyes grew round with surprise.

"'Be I like that, miss, please?' he asked, incredulously.

"'Yes, it is a very good portrait, I think.'

"'I wish I'd 'a tidied of my hair first.'

"She laughed. 'Oh! I don't. You would have lost your picturesqueness, little boy. Well, here's a sixpence for you.' She felt in her pocket. 'Ah! how tiresome, I have not my purse with me. But, here's a book—a fairy-tale book—I brought out with me, how would you like that? Could you read it, I wonder?'

"'Yes,' Ernest said eagerly. 'Father taught me to read in the winter's evenin's he did, an' if you please miss, I'd like to have the book very, very much. We ain't got no books 'cept one—that's a big book called the Bible, an' mother reads to us out o' it on a Sunday when there ain't no school or work.'

"The strange young lady smiled and handed the volume to him. It was bound in blue and gold, and contained much print and many pictures. Ernest could scarcely believe that it really was for him.

"'Does you mean as I'm to keep it, miss—keep it for my own?' he asked, looking up at her wistfully.

"'Yes, for your very own,' she repeated, and then

she laughed again, and told him that he was a funny little boy, and then, while he was still trying to thank her, she put up her sketch-book and went away through the wood, waving her hand to him in a friendly fashion till the thickening trees hid her from his sight.

"But her gift remained, the blue and gold book that looked so smart and new, and was full of wonderful pictures and even more wonderful stories. Ernest picked up the baby in the red shawl and went into the cottage to show his prize to his mother.

"Well, I never!" she said. "That is fine. You'll find plenty of readin' there I reckon."

"Ernest carrying the baby and the big book sallied forth again. He established himself in a quiet corner under a tree, and then, when he had sung the baby to sleep he began to read his new treasure. For the rest of the day he was very quiet and pre-occupied.

"Mother," he said when she bade him 'good-night' that evening. 'Are there any fairies livin' on our hills, d'you think?'

"Fairies? what's put fairies into your head—eh?" she asked, laughing.

"It's the lady's book, mother, 'tis all tales of fairies, tiny folk with wings, what can do all manner o' grand things. They're kind to children, mother, the fairies is. I'd like to know some.'

"'Taint likely as you ever will, any way. Why, Ernest, they're just make-up nonsense to amuse babies, that's what fairies is. Bless you, child, there ain't no truth in such tales.'

"The little boy looked up at her with wistful eyes.

"I'd like to think as there was fairies," he said,

'seems to me they're rare merry folk an' main good to little children. Are you sure as there ain't no fairies, mother, dear?'

" 'Quite sure,' she said decidedly. 'An' you mustn't go an' believe in all they puts in books. There's a deal o' nonsense wrote in these here days.'

"Then she took up the lamp and went away, and Ernest lay in his little bed under the window and watched, with wistful, solemn eyes, the countless brilliant stars that decked the summer sky, and wondered and wondered about the fairies.

" 'Mother says there ain't none 'cos she's never seen any I guess,' he thought. 'They don't live in these parts, most like. One day I'll go a long, long way, as far as ever I can, an' try to find 'em. I'll search awful hard, I'll search till I sees 'em with my own eyes.' And then he fell asleep.

"On the following day Ernest's brothers and sister set forth into the woods to gather wild hyacinths, which pretty blue blossoms were to be tied up in bunches and sold to a neighbor, who had customers for them in an adjacent country town, whither she betook herself weekly with eggs and butter and other farm produce.

" 'May I go too, mother?' Ernest asked.

" 'No, little one, I'd rather you bided at home. I shall be busy, and will want you to mind baby.'

"Ernest turned away his face to hide the tears that sprang to his eyes. He did want to go very, very much. It was written in the stranger lady's fairy book that in the woods, among the thickly growing blue hyacinths dwell the fairies, those tiny folk with gauzy wings and magic powers. Ernest longed to

seek for them there. His mother's answer to his request was a sore disappointment.

"But he was a good little fellow, patient and dutiful, and he said to himself:

" 'I does want to see the fairies, but really and truly I wants to help mother most o' all.'

"No half-hearted service was Ernest's. He stayed at home cheerfully and readily, and when the other children started off merry and laughing, with their big baskets on their arms, and called to him 'good-bye, Ernest, good-bye, we'll not be home till late,' he managed to wave his hand to them and to smile. But when they had gone his childish mouth drooped a little and the tears would spring to his eyes, although he bravely tried to choke them back, so he picked up the baby and the precious story-book and went out on to the hill, that his mother might not see his disappointed looks.

"It was very pleasant out on the hill. A delicious, pine-scented breeze stole up from the woods and fluttered the baby's red shawl. Dainty blue butterflies chased each other over the tall purple thistles and the white and pink fox-gloves. There was a wonderful valley view, and Ernest could see in the far distance the villagers of a neighboring hamlet turning the hay in the pleasant June sunshine.

"Presently the baby fell asleep, and thus freed from his little charge, Ernest was able to open the pages of the precious story-book. This he did with eager fingers, and was soon entirely engrossed in the fortunes of a certain fairy sprite, who set forth, mounted upon a yellow butterfly, to find out what the world was like.

"But the day was warm and drowsy, so drowsy that presently Ernest's book slipped from his hands to the ground, and he did not trouble to pick it up, but lay back among the daisies and the buttercups of the long grass, and watched the tiny cloudlets flow over the deep blue sky and play hide-and-seek with the sun.

"'If I was a fairy an' had wings,' thought the little boy dreamily, 'I'd fly right up to the sky, up, up, like the lark. Mother says heaven is up there, and I'd like to see heaven. I s'pose that blue sky is the carpet of it, an' the stars are little holes that the angels bore so's they can peep through at night, and see that little children are all safe.

"'I wonder if there's such a place as fairyland?' he said, half aloud. 'Or whether it's just make-up nonsense as mother did tell me.'

"'It's another name for dreamland—the children's dreamland,' answered a gentle voice. And Ernest was not surprised when he saw a fairy—a real, beautiful fairy, with silvery wings and a tiny, sparkling wand in her hand, standing upon a buttercup at his side. No, he was not surprised, only glad, and a happy smile broke over his little face as he looked at her.

"'I'm so 'lighted you've come,' he said joyfully. 'I thought as the fairies lived right away in the woods, where the hyacinths grow, that's why I wanted to go along o' the other children.'

"'I know,' the fairy said, and nodded her pretty little head at him, with a kind and understanding smile. 'But when your mother asked you to stay at home and take care of baby, you agreed readily, and

no grumbling spoilt your self-sacrifice. Well, Ernest, it is the stay-at-home children, the unselfish and dutiful children, who find the way into Fairyland. Fairyland is another name for Dreamland—the dreamland that good children know. You have won your passport into Fairyland, little one. Give me your hand and I will take you there.’

“‘But Baby?’ said the child, with a doubtful glance at the bundle in the red shawl. ‘I’ve to mind him, you know.’

“‘Baby is asleep, and my servants, the grasshoppers, will take care of him, while you are away. You are free, Ernest, all are free in Dreamland. Come away with me and see the enchanted land wherein we fairies dwell.’

“You will feel sure, Bernard, that little Ernest needed no second bidding. He held out his hand to the Fairy, and when she took it in hers he instantly became as tiny as she was. Baby, sleeping in the sunshine, his fat fist doubled against his rosy lips, looked like some giant infant, and the blue butterfly that fluttered up in obedience to the Fairy’s call, made a fine large steed, Ernest thought. Everything, excepting himself, seemed suddenly magnified.

“The Fairy and her boy companion mounted the blue butterfly, which immediately flew away over the heather and the bluebells, its gauzy wings glimmering in the sunlight. Presently it entered a wood, and a few moments later it stopped in a grassy glade, where shy rabbits scuttled about with naught to fear, and the ring-dove cooed his sweet summer story. The Fairy and Ernest alighted, and their pretty steed perched itself upon a spray of wild honeysuckle.

“ ‘Here are your fairy friends, Ernest,’ said his companion.

“ And lo ! upon my fixed, delighted ken,
 Appeared the loyal Fays. Some, by degrees,
Crept from the primrose buds that opened then,
 And some from bell-shaped blossoms like the bees.
Some from the dewy meads and rushy leas,
 Flew up like chafers when the rustics pass ;
Some from the rivers, others from tall trees,
Dropped, like shed blossoms, silent to the grass,
Spirits and elfins small of every class.

* * * * *

Peri and Pixy, and quaint Puck the Antic,
 Brought Robin Goodfellow, that merry swain
And stealthy Mab, queen of old realms romantic,
 Came, too, from distance in her tiny wain,
Fresh dripping from a cloud—some bloomy rain,
 Then circling the bright moon, had washed her car
And still bedewed it with a various stain.
 Lastly came Ariel, shooting from a star,
 Who bears all fairy embassies afar.”

“ With wondering eyes the little peasant boy gazed upon this gorgeous crowd, and then, in a sudden access of shyness, he caught his breath and hung back behind his fairy guide.

“ ‘Know no fear,’ she said kindly. ‘We fairies love children, and spend our lives in serving them. Our greatest wish is that they may be good and happy. Children and flowers we love, pretty innocent things both.

“ ‘The pastoral cowslips are our little pets,
 And daisy stars, whose firmament is green,
Pansies and those veiled nuns, meek violets.’

“‘We tend the children and the flowers alike, lovingly and faithfully, and when the little folk sleep

“‘Sweet dreams we shed,
And whilst the tender little soul is fled,
Away to sport with our young elves awhile,
We touch the dimpled cheek with roses red.’

“‘Now, come with me, Ernest, and I will present you to our Fairy Queen—Titania.’

“The fairies welcomed the boy very kindly, and he sat down with them beneath the shadow of the ferns to share their meal of pearly dew and sweet honey, fresh from the flowers. Never before had he partaken of such delightful fare, and the tiny golden goblets and plates, that looked as though they belonged to a doll’s house, delighted his childish fancy. Then, too, there was such beautiful music all the time, the music of the wild birds, that, perched high amid the leafy trees sang loud and clear.

“‘I should think Fairyland must be the nicest place on earth,’ Ernest whispered to his companion, the Fairy guide, who kept beside him and took care of him as though he were especially in her charge.

“She smiled very sweetly.

“‘The nicest place on earth,’ she repeated. ‘And a happy scene for the minds of little sleeping children to visit, happy and safe, because free from all taint of evil. But there is another land above, Ernest, a land fairer than that of the fairies. When heaven is reached, my dear, you will care for Fairyland no longer.’

“‘Will heaven be more beautiful than this?’ he wonderingly asked.

“‘Far, far more beautiful. But here in the Fairy-land of a child’s dream-fancy you may have some faint foretaste of the pure joy of heaven, and you may learn the beauty of goodness and holiness. The fairies will teach you naught but what is lovely. Their loving service it is to point out to little children the best and right, and to guide their baby footsteps on to that straight and narrow road that leads to a better country, even an heavenly.’

“Then gentle fairy children, with sweet faces and soft, musical voices, led Ernest away to join in their games, and they fastened to his shoulders a tiny pair of silvery wings, that he might fly about like the rest of them, and race with the butterflies and the busy buzzing bees over the summer flowers. And when he wore these wings, he might never feel tired nor sad, but only happy and bright and joyous, as happy and bright and joyous as the brilliant sprites who were his playfellows.

“‘Do you never learn lessons?’ he asked the fairy children.

“‘Yes,’ they said, ‘we learn one lesson, only one. It is how to be good. Nothing else signifies, so they say, the grown-up fairies who know.’

“‘And when we have learned how to be good, then we are happy,’ another fairy child told the little stranger. ‘Happy with the only kind of happiness that is real and lasting.’

“‘Do you do no work?’

“‘Work? We have plenty of that. Our work is to help the children, the little, mortal children. We whisper good and holy thoughts in their ears, and we do our best to help them with their lessons, and we

try to make their play pleasant to them. And when they are good and dutiful, our Fairy Queen writes it down in her book—a book with a white cover—and then, when they fall asleep, we bring them away here that they may join in the happiness of Fairyland.’

“‘And don’t the naughty children come to Fairyland?’ Ernest asked quickly. ‘Won’t you let them come?’

“‘No, there is a board up at the entrance to Fairyland, and on it is written “No naughty children here.” When the naughty children read that, they feel sorry and ashamed and they turn sadly away.’

“‘Poor things!’ Ernest felt very sorry for them, those naughty children who were shut out of Fairyland.

“‘They may repent,’ said a fairy sprite. ‘When they repent we forgive them and let them in.’

“‘If they knew how beautiful Fairyland is, I’m sure they’d all try to be good,’ little Ernest said.

“‘You will be surprised to hear,’ one fairy child told him, ‘that there are some children who don’t believe in Fairyland.’

“‘They tell us fairy-lore is dead,
Titania’s kingdom wasted,
The merry elves and sprites all fled,
The nectar-dew untasted.

* * * * *

‘But few ask whither they have flown,
And none, alas, are grieving,
For, woe is me, the world has grown
Sedate and unbelieving.’

* * * * *

“‘That’s true enough. The clever little folk of

now-a-days have their minds so crammed with learning that there is no room left in them for fairy fancies. 'Tis a pity, for fairy fancies are good, and lead to higher and better fancies, and there is so much stern prose in life that it is not likely to become too poetical. One of your poets, little Ernest, says of us—he was a friend of the fairies :

“ ‘ ’Twas they first schooled my young imagination,
To take its flight like any new-fledged bird,
And shewed the span of wingéd meditation,
Stretched wider than things grossly seen or heard.’

“ When Ernest had had enough of play, his fairy friends took him to sail upon the lake in the pleasant summer sunshine, and their boat was a big golden-hearted water-lily that floated smoothly with the current of the stream, and needed no propelling power and no guiding.

“ The water-lily glided along so quietly that the soothing motion made Ernest feel quite drowsy. Then his fairy companions began to sing and their singing sounded like the music of the wind filtering through the leafy branches of the trees, and one silvery-winged elf struck his fingers across a tiny golden lyre in fit accompaniment.

“ ‘ It’s lovely,’ said Ernest, as he leaned back in the frail fairy bark. ‘ It’s lovelier than anything I’ve ever heard.’

“ It is dream-music,’ a fairy child answered softly. ‘ And that is the sweetest in the world. Only the children hear it, the children who are wandering happily in beautiful Fairyland, when their mothers think they are sleeping soundly in their little beds.’

" 'When the pearly dew's are sleeping
All the wild flowers of the dell,
And the glow-worms' light is peeping
Out from every elfin cell.

* * * * *
'Then we fairies roam with pleasure,
Tripping gaily o'er the green,
To the lute's enchanting measure,
Near the gently flowing stream.'

* * * * *

"That was the fairies' song, and it found an echo in the rippling waters of the stream, in the breeze that whispered to the bending rushes, in the twittering notes of the little birds.

"A delicious sense of peace and rest stole over the spirit of little Ernest, and he lay back in the soft golden heart of the lily and fell asleep.

"When he awakened he found himself on the hill-side near his home, with the baby, in its red shawl, sleeping soundly by his side, and his mother bending over him with an amused smile on her pleasant, homely face.

" 'Why, you've been sleepin' as sound as baby, Ernest, I do declare,' she said.

"Ernest sat up on the grass among the buttercups and daisies, and tossed back his thick, curly hair from his pretty little face.

" 'Mother, I've been in Fairyland, in real, true Fairyland,' he told her solemnly.

" 'Well, I never!' And the good woman laughed incredulously.

"But Ernest did not mind her laughing. He was too happy to mind.

" 'Fairyland 's real,' he said, smiling up at her

happily. 'An' the children know it, though grown folk mayn't. It's a happy place, is Fairyland.'

"And a wandering breeze brushed his soft cheek, and seemed to whisper in his ear, gently, musically, 'It is the children's own, their land of dreams.'"

* * * * *

"I like that story," little Sir Bernard said. "Is it true, Timmy dear?"

"I don't know, my darling. I read it once in some book, the name of which I forget."

"It 'minds me of what Dr. Allan said when Jeanie an' me got home safe that drefful time, when we went to look for the fairies an' got lost."

"What did he say, love?"

"That we should never find the fairies if we went to look for them so, but if we were good and stayed at home an' did our duty, p'raps they'd come to us when we least expected them."

"That is true," Miss Timms said.

"What's my duty, Timmy?"

"Your duty is to be obedient and good, Bernard, to learn your lessons carefully, and to be kind and patient to those who come in your way."

"Has everyone got a duty?"

"Certainly."

"Has Mrs. Fleet got a duty? No, she ain't I s'pose, 'cos she's so ill an' old, poor thing, an' can't do anything 'cept sit in her chair by the fire quite still an' quiet."

"Still she has a duty too, and so she would tell you if you asked her, my dear. Her duty is to be patient and uncomplaining, and so to wait for the day when

God shall take her home to rest for ever from her troubles."

"That's a sad duty. I like my duty better," and the little Baronet's pretty, earnest face grew very grave. "I wonder, though, if the fairies help her—to do her duty, I mean?" he added, with a wistful glance. "Or is it only little children they help to be good?"

"I think Our Father, who is in heaven, helps her, Bernard dear," Miss Timms softly said.

The child looked up at the deep blue cloudless sky above the tall trees thoughtfully, reverently; not in vain had he listened to the simple creed that Jeanie and Effie believed in so unquestioningly.

"That's best of all," he said. "An' Timmy, fairyland must be a happy place, but not so glad an' sweet as heaven, 'cos fairyland's a dream, an' heaven is real—*real*—an' for ever!"



THEY WERE DIGGING POTATOES.

CHAPTER XIX.

A DAY OF SURPRISES.

"When we and the world are young life seems
Woven of happy days and dreams."

"Ah! happy years! Once more who would not be a boy?"
—BYRON.

THE doctor's children were in the little garden of Rose Villa digging new potatoes, with the assistance of Chum, who sat by looking on with a very knowing expression on his sharp, doggy face. Now and then they desisted from their labors and took Chum for short rides on an old mat which they borrowed, without Annette's leave, from the kitchen, and which they carried between them. Chum on these occasions

looked resigned, if somewhat bored. He was accustomed to the freaks and fancies of his young owners, and when it pleased them to attire him in a coat and cap, and make him look quite ridiculous, he endured the indignity with great complaisance. He knew quite well, as dogs will know, that Effie and Jeanie meant nothing but fun, that they were very fond of him and always kind to him.

"He's a dear," said Effie, "I'm sure there isn't in all the world a dearer doggie than Chum."

And Chum wagged his short tail vigorously as though as to say, "I appreciate the compliment."

The children were very energetically employed in digging. They looked hot and breathless from their efforts. They had promised Annette, who was busy, to dig enough potatoes to fill a dish for lunch and a dish for supper, and Effie was profoundly conscious of a certain chapter of geography that had to be learned before two o'clock, while Jeanie, in her usual careless manner, tried to forget a long column of spelling that awaited her attention.

"My little ones, are you out there?" and Dr. Allan came to the garden door and peered with short-sighted eyes down the flower-bordered path.

Spades and basket were flung aside, and two holland-clad little forms rushed upon him.

"How early you're home, papa!"

"We thought you was goin' to be out to lunch, papa!"

"Annette said you'd gone to Graffham."

"We're diggin' potatoes. It's hot work. It makes your arms ache."

"An' Chum wants to eat them but we won't let

him. They're just as hard as bullets and would be certain sure to choke him."

"After we've dug the potatoes, we're to pick strawberries for tea, 'cos Bernard's comin'. An' Annette's making a cake, the sort he likes best, you know, with currants in it."

"But I don't like currants. They always 'mind me of flies."

"Chatterboxes! Listen to me, children. I've come to talk to you about something, something important."

Dr. Allan seated himself on a little wooden bench near the garden door, and Jeanie and Effie stood before him with eager, expectant little faces.

"Is it somethin' sad, papa dear, you look so grave?" Effie said, with sudden anxiety.

"No, my child, nothing sad, but something that requires grave consideration. How should you like to leave Bumbleton, my dears, this little home, and Miss Brady, and all our quiet life here?"

"Would you leave it too, papa?" That was Effie's first question.

"Yes, dears, I should go with you."

"Where should we go, papa? To a nice place?" Jeanie was eminently practical.

"To a large town—to London. I have this morning received a letter, my dears, offering me the post of physician to a children's hospital in London. It is a good post, and the work would be congenial to me. The salary I should receive would enable me to give you many advantages that you have not hitherto enjoyed. At the same time, we must, if I accept the appointment, live in town. We must give up our

pleasant little country home. In London you would have less freedom, decidedly less freedom. We should not drive every day through country lanes, sweet with flowers, and instead of playing in the fields, you would walk in crowded streets. But on the other hand, there are advantages, the advantages of a first-rate education, and by-and-by, when you grow older, social advantages that you must miss if we stay in quiet Bumbleton."

"I'd like us to go," Jeanie quickly said. "I've never seen a real big town, but I'm sure it's nice, and," she added, somewhat ungratefully, "it would be jolly not to do lessons with Miss Brady any more."

"The last is a reason I do not approve of," Dr. Allan remarked gravely.

"But, papa dear, she's so cross to me! Indeed she is."

"And what are you to her, Jeanie?"

The little girl hung her head.

"I s'pose I'm disagreeable an' rude sometimes; but—but it's difficult to be good to a person who's never pleased with one, even when one tries."

Dr. Allan recognized the truth of this, and wisely changed the subject.

"And what does my Effie say to the move?" he asked.

"Why, papa, if you an' Jeanie's goin', of course I'd like to go too," she answered cheerfully.

He drew her to him, and kissed her tenderly. "That's my little home bird!"

"Papa!" Jeanie suddenly exclaimed, "I s'pose Chum can come with us, an' Patters, an' all the other pets?"

"Oh, Chum *must* come," cried Effie, hugging him; a proceeding he did not in the least approve of, and quickly concluded by wriggling himself free.

"Yes, we must take Chum, and the little monkey too, and Jacko, and perhaps Grip. The pigeons, and the doves, and the rabbits will be happier in country homes."

"But the doves coo so nice!" Effie sighed regretfully.

"And I like my tumbler pigeons," said Jeanie.

"Perhaps you would rather stay at Bumbleton after all? I want to know your real wishes, my dears, my only desire is that you may be happy," Dr. Allan said gently. He looked at the two little faces rather wistfully.

The children rushed upon him, and half-smothered him with kisses.

"You dear papa!" cried Jeanie, in her impetuous way. "Of course, we know that!"

"And you would like to go to London; you're sure you would like it?" questioned the doctor, as soon as he could speak.

Jeanie answered for herself and her sister.

"We're sure we'd like it," she said decidedly.

"Then I shall have to run up to town next week to arrange things," said the doctor rising. "And to see about a house too—a house with a little garden, if possible."

"If there's a garden, can't the rabbits go? They only want a little place where their hutch can stand," pleaded Jeanie.

To this her father made answer by a phrase rather common to grown people, a phrase that generally

seems unsatisfactory to the little folk to whom it is addressed.

"We'll see," he said. And then he went off to his study to write letters, and Jeanie and Effie were left to discuss their fresh prospects together, which they did with great gravity over the new potatoes.

* * * * *

"If you please, young ladies, little Sir Bernard's come, and Lady Bentinck's with him. Master said I was to tell you."

This announcement was made by the little servant, who assisted Annette with her household duties. Jeanie and Effie had just come home from Miss Brady's, and Annette was directing them in struggling into freshly-starched white frocks, which she insisted upon their donning, as there was to be "company to tea." Jeanie protested that Bernard, who was their constant playfellow, could not be regarded as "company," to which Annette merely responded that she wasn't going to give "that conceited London woman, Adela," the opportunity to say that she didn't make her little ladies look nice.

"Master said as I was to ask you to step down to the drawing-room at once," continued the little maid, and having thus delivered herself of her message departed.

"Stand still, Miss Jeanie, do, or how am I to make your hair look as it should?"

Jeanie whisked her curls out of Annette's hands with some adroitness. "Oh, that'll do quite well," she said, and forthwith fled.

"There never was such a child!" exclaimed An-

nette indignantly. "There, you're finished, Miss Effie, you may go."

Little Sir Bernard met the children on the stairs.

"I was just comin' to call you," he said eagerly. "Mother's in the drawing-room talkin' to Doctor Allan, an' she wants to see you both, most partic'lar. She can't stop, 'cos she's goin' to a garden party at Lady Merton's."

He looked very bright and pretty in his delicate sailor's suit of white and palest blue, and with his soft, glossy curls fresh from Adela's brush. He was a little bit of a boy, fragile and slight as some dainty piece of Dresden china; but, if you had looked into his eyes, you would have seen a frank and generous light, a *brave* light, that would have put you in mind of the pictured faces of valiant cavaliers who fought right splendidly in the knightly days of yore. Little Sir Bernard, despite his delicate looks, was no soft, effeminate boy. Child though he was, there was already much that was chivalrous and courageous in his character, innate chivalry and courage that defied spoiling!

"Mother's tellin' Doctor Allan about a delightful, an' *awful* delightful plan," he informed Jeanie and Effie. "Oh! it's simply 'licious!" He executed a wild caper of delight in the hall.

"D'you know what it is; do you, Bernie?" questioned Jeanie.

"Yes, I thought of it my own self. Come, come at once." And he literally dragged the two little girls into the drawing-room.

Dr. Allan was standing on the hearthrug speaking earnestly to Lady Bentinck. He stopped when the

children entered, and Lady Bentinck, who was seated by the window, held out both her hands to them in her friendly, pretty way.

"I've come to ask your father to let you come with Bernard and me to the seaside for a few weeks," she said. "Would you like it, dears?"

"There'll be sands to dig in, an' donkeys to ride, an' boats to sail in, an' a pier, an' bands o' music, an' negroes," little Sir Bernard appended, with eager breathlessness.

"Oh! it would be lovely," Jeanie said wonderingly.

"The sea! We've never seen the sea," cried Effie.

"It's *awful* kind of you to ask us, Lady Bentinck," added both little girls together. Their beaming faces expressed, gratitude and delight that could not be put into words.

"It is my boy's invitation," little Sir Bernard's mother answered them, smiling, "and it will give him great delight if you will let them come," she added, turning to Dr. Allan.

"You will be charmed to go, won't you, little ones?" he said, with a kind glance at the eager faces raised expectantly to his.

"Oh, papa, may we—will you let us?" cried Jeanie.

"I should be sorry to deprive you of so much pleasure, my dear. Lady Bentinck, your invitation is most kind. You are indeed good to my children."

"They may come with us?" she said. "That's right. We'll take great care of them, and I hope they'll have a very happy time. You are delighted, aren't you, *mon cher*?" She turned to Bernard.

"*Tremendously* 'lighted!"

"And now I must be off," said Lady Bentinck.

"My ponies are fidgetting horribly, and that new groom has no idea of managing them." She kissed Jeanie and Effie and told them very kindly that they would all have great fun together at the seaside. Dr. Allan went out to see her into her pretty carriage, and the children ran to the window, and waved their hands to her until she was out of sight.

"She's awful pretty an' sweet," Jeanie said to little Sir Bernard. "I wish she was my mother, I'd like to have a mother of my own."

Jeanie and Bernard began to talk eagerly of all they would do at the seaside, but Effie slipped quietly out of the room, and met her father in the hall.

"Papa dear," she said, taking his hand, "please let me stay with you. I want to, really."

"Why, what is this?" he asked, in surprise. "I thought you were pleased to go with your kind friends to the sea, my little girl."

"Won't you be lonely, when we're away, papa?" she said, wistfully.

"Ah, I see. No, Effie mine, I'll not be lonely. I'm going away, you know, to arrange about our new home in London. I shall be away for some time."

Then he stooped and kissed her earnest little face.

"My dear, thoughtful little girl!" he said.



A JOLLY SAILOR BOY.

CHAPTER XX.

BY THE SEA.

“Do you hear the long waves rolling for ever, evermore,
Outside the blowing harbor-bar, and up the quiet shore?
Do you wonder what they say,
To the shingles worn and grey?”

—F. E. WEATHERLEY.

“My soul is full of longing
For the secret of the sea,
And the heart of the great Ocean,
Sends a thrilling pulse through me.”

—LONGFELLOW.

THEY had never been away from home, from little Rose Villa, with its red-brick walls, suburban aspect and miniature garden, before, and their small experiences had been limited to the locality of drowsy Bumbleton.

They found immense excitement in helping Annette

to pack the two small tin boxes, just alike, that they had chosen for themselves at the village trunk-maker's. To select these tin boxes had been a work of time, and "papa's" opinion had been requested on the respective merits of brown and yellow coats of paint. And then the children had had their initials painted on the box lids as distinguishing marks. "J. A." in blue paint and "E. A." in red paint. When the trunk-maker at last sent the two little boxes home to Rose Villa they looked very smart and clean, and smelt very new, and Jeanie and Effie were delighted with them, and kept opening and shutting them, and locking and unlocking them, until Annette interfered, saying they would hamper the locks.

Lessons went on as usual, and Miss Brady made little, if any, allowance for the unusual excitement of her little pupils, and severely returned Jeanie's rather ill-learned lessons, with such scathing remarks as sorely tried the high spirit of the careless pupil. Effie plodded on patiently and steadily, as was her wont, and upon her Miss Brady looked approvingly.

"You deserve a pleasant holiday at the seaside, Effie," she said, but to Jeanie she had nothing to say, only glances full of disapproval fell to her share.

Chum was to go with his little mistress, Chum couldn't possibly be left behind. Bernard understood that, and explained all about it to his mother, and Lady Bentinck gave a laughing consent to the beloved doggie's being one of the party.

"You'll take the greatest care of Patters, won't you, Annette?" Effie said, rather wistfully. "I wish he could come, too, but papa says we can't take him."

"What with children and dogs, Lady Bentinck will

have enough without monkeys, I'm thinking," Annette returned. "Now don't you go a worritin' your little head about Patters, Miss Effie, he'll do well enough with me."

"And you'll feed my rabbits, Annette, and the pigeons?"

"I shall certainly do so, Miss Jeanie. I've no desire to starve them, that I can assure you," she replied, with ruffled dignity. "I shall look after Jacko and Grip and the fowls likewise. It's a heavy responsibility, but I have never shirked my responsibilities, so I may truthfully say. As for Jacko, I always hold as he's no common kind, he isn't like any other green parrot as I've ever known, and he always gives me a good grip when he's got the chance, still I'll do my duty by him, and go in hopes as he won't peck my eyes out."

Jeanie and Effie laughed rather unsympathetically. Annette's fear of the green parrot was one of the small household jokes of Rose Villa, and the wily Jacko knew as well as possible that she was afraid of him, and never failed to take advantage of her. Parrots have a weakness for pet aversions, and Annette was Jacko's pet aversion.

At last *the* day came, and Effie, awakening early, called to her still sleeping sister:

"It's morning, Jeanie, and such a lovely morning, and in two hours' time we shall be in the train."

There was no trouble in arousing Jeanie on this occasion, and when presently Annette came in to pull up the blinds, she found both her little ladies already dressed.

"Papa dear," Effie whispered, as she bade him good-

bye on the platform of the little station at Bumbleton, "I wish you were coming too. It would be quite perfect then." She looked up rather wistfully into the thin, nervous face.

"We shall see papa again soon—very soon," Jeanie hastily interrupted. "An' we'll write him long letters, an' tell him all we're doing by the sea."

Jeanie was affectionate, but eminently practical, and she could not understand why Effie's eyes should fill with tears when she was parting from her father for a few weeks only. She felt rather impatient with her little sister, whose softer and more clinging nature frequently puzzled her.

But Effie's face grew brighter as the hours passed by, and the express train sped swiftly on its way through smiling summer lands, and the children beheld a succession of charming pictures, a sort of rapidly-moving panorama of the pleasant pasture lands of dear old England. Traveling was a novelty to the doctor's little girls, and their unaccustomed eyes opened very wide when the train tore through crowded stations in big towns; while crossing London from one station to another seemed as some exciting voyage of discovery to them.

Then there was a picnic lunch in the train, dainty sandwiches, and cakes, and refreshing lemonade. Lunch made a pleasant diversion, and when it was over the children were quite willing to fall in with Miss Timms' suggestion that they should "take forty winks." The afternoon was hot and sultry, and they had all been up betimes that morning. So Adela extemporized couches with rugs and cushions, and the small trio composed, without much difficulty, their

minds to sleep. Tootsie went to sleep too. She felt the heat very much, and her tongue was hanging out of her mouth, while she breathed like a miniature steam engine. Only Chum refused to participate in the general slumbers. He sat erect, with cocked ears, and mounted guard over the provision baskets, which he appeared to consider his peculiar charge.

It was dusky evening when Shellbeach-by-the-Sea was reached, and, moreover, rain was falling heavily. The darkness and the wet had a subduing effect upon the children's spirits, and they submitted quite meekly to being bundled into a cab with Adela, while Lady Bentinck, Miss Timms and Lady Bentinck's maid appropriated the only other available vehicle, and the invaluable Brace remained behind at the station to collect and bring on the voluminous luggage.

"Why didn't we have a hansom, Adela?" little Sir Bernard presently asked. "I hate four-wheelers, they bump and roll so. You should have got a hansom. You *know* I always like a hansom." He turned a reproachful and somewhat indignant face upon his attendant.

"Bless you, Sir Bernard, there aren't no 'ansoms in this out o' the way 'ole," Adela returned. "I, for my part, can't bear sich places. I holds by Brighton and Scarboro', an' them fashionable resorts. But there—it's my Lady's choice, an' it ain't my business to speak my mind."

"I wish we'd never left Bumbleton. I hate Uncle Arthur for wanting his house when we was so happy in it!" cried the little Baronet petulantly. He was tired and cross, and Adela's remarks on the change of scene were not encouraging.

"I know I'll never be happy in nasty Shellbeach-by-the-Sea!" he cried, stamping his foot with something of his old impatience.

"Oh, sit still, Bernard, do," Jeanie said crossly—Jeanie was tired and cross too. "You do fidget so. I wish I'd gone in the cab with Lady Bentinck."

"She wouldn't have taken you! She'd not have been bothered with silly little girls!" he flashed out.

"It's you who are silly," Jeanie returned sharply. "Silly an' rude."

"It's not your place to go a-lecturin' of Sir Bernard, any way, Miss Jeanie," said Adela, quickly interposing. "An' there's more than one in here as is cross, I'm thinking."

Adela thought all the world of her little master, and could not bear anyone to find fault with him—always excepting herself.

"We're all cross, I think," little Sir Bernard remarked, "cept Effie." And he broke into a laugh. "Effie's never cross, never."

"Look! The sea!" cried Effie.

Yes, there it was, spread before them, the great, grand sea—vast, majestic, wonderful. Effie and Jeanie had never seen it before, and they were filled with surprise and delight—delight not unmixed with awe. Their experience of water had been limited to the miniature lake in the grounds of "The Chestnuts." Here was something altogether amazing and marvellous.

Shellbeach-by-the-Sea is a quiet, out-of-the-way little place, but it is a very pretty little place. A tiny town built in the centre of a charming bay on the north-east coast, and with great, white cliffs towering above

it like some protecting rampart. When little Sir Bernard and his friends first saw it evening was closing in, and heavy rain predicted an approaching thunderstorm, so many of its beauties were hidden from them, but Jeanie and Effie at least were well content by the peep that they got from the closed window of the cab.

"I know we shall like Shellbeach," Jeanie said. And her conviction was a perfectly true one.

Lady Bentinck had taken rooms in the one hotel of which Shellbeach could boast. The hotel stood on the edge of the sands, and the windows of the children's quarters commanded charming sea views. Jeanie and Effie were delighted with everything. They thought table d'hôte "great fun," and made friends directly with an assiduous little French waiter, who eagerly anticipated the children's wants. Little Sir Bernard could talk to him in his own language easily enough, but Jeanie found Miss Brady's French rather useless, and wished heartily that she had taken more trouble to master verbs.

"They're nasty, but they're necessary I s'pose," she confidentially remarked to Miss Timms, who said she supposed so too.

"When I'm grown up, I shall be a waiter, I've quite 'cided on that," said little Sir Bernard impressively.

As her son decided upon a fresh profession almost every day, Lady Bentinck was not much overcome by this solemn announcement.

The children were tired, and raised no objections when Adela suggested the advisability of going to bed early.

"If we go to sleep, mornin' will come all the sooner,

an' then we'll be able to go out an' see the sea," Effie told Jeanie and Bernard.

"I want to see the negroes most, what play banjos, and sing nice funny songs," said the little Baronet, with a happy disregard for grammar.

"An' I'd rather pick up shells, and look at the sea—look an' look. It's so beautiful, I could look at it for ever," cried Effie eagerly.

"Lady Bentinck says I may ride over the sands on a donkey, that will be the best fun," exclaimed Jeanie.

"Come along Sir Bernard, do. You look quite tired out." And Adela swooped down upon her little charge, and forthwith bore him off to bed.

When they were alone, Effie turned to her sister.

"O Jeanie!" she said. "I wish we were at home in our own little room at Rose Villa, don't you? I wonder if papa's missing us—dear papa. I'm sure we miss him."

Effie was essentially a little home bird, and she had slept in her familiar room at Rose Villa, a humble room enough, with faded blinds, and no carpet on the floor, and rather dilapidated furniture, ever since she could remember. This small outbreak of what is popularly called "home-sickness," was but natural.

But Jeanie was not sympathetic.

"I think you're silly," she said. "An' if you talk like that always, I'll not be able to 'joy the seaside one bit."

After that Effie said no more.

But she felt happier presently, when Lady Bentinck came in to bid her and Jeanie good-night. Lady Bentinck was so pretty and so kind, and she kissed them as tenderly as their own mother might

have. A child's heart is easily comforted, and little Effie fell asleep with a happy smile on her baby lips.

* * * * *

"The sea is very blue," Jeanie said. "I think its bluer than the sky."

"Look at these dear little shells with pink linings, Bernie. Aren't they pretty? I've picked up nearly a basketful."

"Yes, here are some more. You may have them Effie. I don't want them."

It was a delicious morning, sunny and bright, all the storm-clouds of the previous night had rolled away, and the world was gay and pleasant once more. The little waves danced and sparkled in the sunlight, and the fishermen's brown-sailed boats curvetted in the breeze like butterflies on the wing. Adela sat on a break-water with her sewing, and little Sir Bernard and his companions played on the shore.

They found plenty to amuse them. There were negroes with banjos, a Punch and Judy show, and a very noisy piano-organ, then there was an acrobat, whose wonderful feats called forth shrieks of delight from the boys, and an organ grinder with a monkey very like Patters. The beach was crowded with children and nurses, funny little bare-legged children, who waded in the sea, and caught tiny crabs in their tin buckets, and capered over the wet sand like so many water babies. Effie and Jeanie were quick to follow Bernard's example, when he pulled off his shoes and stockings. It was charming, they thought, to trot about bare-footed, and to splash through the clear cool sea water, and run races with the little buoyant

waves that came tumbling one after another up the sandy beach. There was nothing to spoil in their plain holland frocks and shady sun-hats. Children, healthy, active children, love clothes that won't be spoiled, clothes in which they can caper about and feel free. Dr. Allan knew this, and his little people were attired so that they could enjoy a ramble through the fields, or a scramble on the shore as the case might be.

At last, tired of play, little Sir Bernard left Effie and Jeanie to finish their sand castle, and flung himself down upon the beach to rest.

In the shadow of a boat hard by, sat a fisherman mending his net. He had an honest, pleasant, sun-burnt face, and his fingers moved deftly as he manipulated the twine he held. He was whistling to himself softly and not unmusically.

"You look very busy," said little Sir Bernard, leaning his chin upon his hand, and watching him with some interest.

"I'm always busy," said the fisherman, smiling.

"Do you catch a great many fish?" asked the little Baronet.

"Aye, a many. Did ye ever catch fish, little gentleman?"

Bernard shook his head. "No, I live in London; there's no fish there for me to catch, 'cept the gold-fish in the glass tank in the drawing-room. Where's your home? Do you live near the sea?"

"Main near. Over there's my home—I lives in a old boat, turned bottom-side upmost—so. Ye may see it for yersel'. 'Tis coated over with tar—black as ink—to keep rain and wind out. 'Tis my grand-

father's old boat, he bin out in it many an' many a year, and when it weren't seaworthy no more, he said, said he, 'Well, 'twill make me a foine house,' and so it did."

Bernard was greatly interested.

"I wish we lived in a boat, my mother an' me," he exclaimed. "It must be jolly, awfully jolly. D'you live there with your wife an' your little children, Mr. Fisherman? Do the little children like livin' in a boat?"

"I ain't got no little children, sir. My wife an' our boy they died—wuz took off wi' fever, two years ago, come Christmas."

A sad look crept over the fisherman's bronzed face: Bernard felt sure that he must have loved his wife and his little boy very much.

"I'm sorry," he said gently, and held out his hand. "I'm very sorry."

"Thankee, sir. You're a kind little gentleman, I'm sure." A big, brown hand clasped the little, white one strongly.

"Sir Bernard!" said Adela, in a protesting tone. She put down her work and came towards the pair.

"Go away, Adela. I don't want you. I'm busy talkin'. May I come an' see your boat-house, please?" He turned to his new friend.

Adela retired discomfited and disapproving.

"A pickin' up common acquaintances, I don't hold with it at all," she muttered discontentedly. "But there, her ladyship says he's to please hisself in sich ways, so I'm powerless. That's one o' Doctor Allan's notions; he says, says he, to me, 'The children will learn no harm from simple cottage folk, Adela. It's

right that they should know that the world is not all luxury and riches. Such knowledge will bring unselfishness into the tender little hearts that are quick to sympathize.' Them's his words exactly, and it's all very fine as a principle, but in my opinion the aristocracy is a lowerin' of themselves when they consorts with their inferiors, an' a Baronet an' a fisherman ain't meant to be friends."

Having thus relieved her feelings, little Sir Bernard's lofty-minded attendant resumed her sewing.

"May I see your boat-house?" the little Baronet asked the big fisherman.

"Will her let ye come?" The fisherman, with a wave of his brown hand, indicated the scornful Adela.

"Of course she will. I shan't ask her."

"But boys, wot-ever they be, should mind their mothers."

"Mothers! *She* isn't my mother. My mother's beautiful—awful beautiful. Adela's my servant."

"Will ye ask your mother then, little gentleman?"

"She wouldn't mind—not a bit," Bernard answered confidently. "She'd only say, 'You must do just what pleases you, dear.' She nearly always says that. 'Sides, I can't ask her now, 'cos she's gone for a drive with Timmy. I'll come at once and see your house, if you please, Mr. Fisherman. I don't like 'by-an-by,' so I hope you won't say it to me. It makes me feel cross always, an' I don't want to be cross, 'cos that's naughty, Doctor Allan says, an' I'm trying not to be naughty. It's rather difficult, but I hope I'll 'ceed, presently, if I try hard.'"

The fisherman scratched his ears reflectively, and gazed at Adela.

"May the little gentleman come along o' I, miss?" he asked humbly.

Thus addressed, Adela looked mollified. It was evident that the fisherman appreciated her superiority. She instantly became convinced that he was a person of some discernment.

"I make no objection to Sir Bernard's a'go'in with you, provided I comes along of him," she said.

"That's as you pleases, miss," responded the new acquaintance. "But, beggin' your pardon, my poor place ain' fit fur ladies to set foot in." This was a diplomatic way of disposing of her undesired company that met with little Sir Bernard's highest approval, who hastily added: "An' there's Effie and Jeanie, you know, Adela; p'raps, if you come away, they'll get lost."

"Is your house far off?" Adela asked of the fisherman.

"But some twenty yards, miss—that old pitch-covered boat. 'Tis right in your sight as you sits here."

"I may go, Adela? I'm going."

"Very well, Sir Bernard. But don't you be long." Adela, softened by the humble demeanor of the fisherman, was unusually gracious.

Little Sir Bernard and the fisherman went off together like two old friends.

"Don't you love the sea?" said the little boy, raising his pretty, baby face to the bronzed and bearded countenance. "Isn't it awf'ly nice to be a fisherman?"

"I thinks so, little gentleman. The sea's bin all to me sin' my wife an' child be gone. He was just such a little chap as you, wuz my boy, sir. A merry, jolly

little chap. I was main fond o' him, an' he used to think as there weren't no one in a' the world like 'is papa. Well, none loved 'un better, the little 'un."

"I 'spect he was fond of the sea—your little boy?"

"Aye, to be *shure*. He'd a bin a fisherman likewise, an' a coom out wi' me in the *Black-Eyed Susan*, if he'd been spared, he would."

"What's the *Black-Eyed Susan*?"

"It's my boat, an' as good a fishin' smack as you could set eyes on in all Shellbeach, 'tho' I sez it, as shouldn't. She flies like the wind, do the *Black-Eyed Susan*."

They had reached the old boat, that had been turned into a house. It made a very nice house, Bernard thought. There were little glass windows to it, and boxes of flowers fixed to the sills, and a porch with a bench in it.

The fisherman pushed the door open and they went in.

"What a nice room! I'd like to live in this room always!" cried little Sir Bernard.

He was delighted with the open hearth beneath the wide chimney, with the great sea-chest in which the fisherman kept all his best treasures, and with the quaint rough furniture that the master of the boat-house had made for himself, and which he displayed with much pride. He said he would like to be a fisherman and live in a boat-house and sail in a fishing smack called the *Black-Eyed Susan*. He said he thought he would rather be a fisherman than a waiter, although Alphonse was very nice and funny, and always brought him the largest helping of cherry tart he could get hold of at table d'hôte.

The fisherman was delighted with his talkative little visitor, and smiled down upon him with good-natured amusement.

"Well, yer does mind me o' the little one, it's your ways more nor yer looks I think," he presently exclaimed.

"The little one?"

"My boy, sir, him as I told you on. Here's his likeness, sir, in that frame above the shelf."

"I should like to see it very much, but I'm not tall enough. Will you lift me up, please?—I don't think I'm *very* heavy."

The fisherman hoisted little Sir Bernard up in his strong arms, and the child looked upon the pictured face of a jolly sailor boy, at least he was dressed as a sailor, although he was much too young to have served as one, quite a baby in fact.

"That's my Robbie," the fisherman said, and there was both sorrow and pride in his voice. "My boy wot's gone."

"I like him," little Sir Bernard remarked, speaking gently, almost reverently, **of the dead child**. "I know I'd ~~have~~ liked him if I'd met him. I'm sorry he's gone from you Mr. Fisherman, but you'll be with him again one day you know—in heaven. Everybody that's friends ~~and loves~~ God and each other will meet there and be happy at last you see, Dr. Allan told me so. My father's there and Effie an' Jeanie's mother, an' poor old Mr. Pat who was so tired, Dr. Allan says so. Dr. Allan's very clever, I think he knows everything."

"To be sure he's right enough, for my wife she used to read it to me out o' the Bible, an' all's true what's writ there," the fisherman said.

Then he took Bernard to see the hammock, slung from the rafters of the low roof, in which he slept every night. Bernard thought it a charming arrangement, in every way superior to a bed, and he said at once that he should ask his mother to buy him a hammock when they went home to London.

The fisherman was displaying some pretty shells for his small visitor's benefit, when some one knocked on the door of the boat-house and Adela's voice proclaimed that it was luncheon time, and she and the little ladies were waiting for Sir Bernard, and couldn't go back to the hotel without him.

"May I come to see you again, please?" the little boy asked as he shook hands with his new acquaintance. "An' I'll bring Effie an' Jeanie."

"Aye, do," said the fisherman heartily, a broad smile on his bronzed face. "It's main glad I'll be to see ye, little master, for you've got the ways o' him—o' my little boy wot's gone."

"He's such a nice man," Bernard told Adela as they walked back across the sands, Jeanie and Effie with their little tin buckets filled with treasures of the seashore, such as are dear to children. "An *awful* nice man. He goes out fishing in a boat called *Black-Eyed Susan*, an' often he's out all night, an' when there's a dead calm he lets the boat lie to, an' he reads the Bible by the light of his lantern—out there far away on the sea. When I'm grown up I shall be a fisherman."

* * * * *

"Adela," cried little Sir Bernard, bounding into the children's sitting room on the following morning. "Adela, you an' Effie an' Jeanie is to go on to the

beach without me, please, an' I'm to join you by-an'-by. I've got to go down to the station with mother to see an old lady who is passing through—my god-mother, she is. I hope she'll pass through quick, 'cos I want to go an' talk to Mr. Fisherman while he mends his nets. Good-bye, Effie, please tell my Mr. Fisherman I'm comin' soon."

He rushed away as quickly as he had come, disregarding Adela's entreaties that he would stay a moment and let her attire him in "a smarter costoom."

"I like these plain things that can't be spoilt, best," was all he deigned to shout back as he capered down the stairs, two steps at a time, looking wonderfully unlike the pale, delicate, London child who had gone to Bumbleton not three months before.

"There's no gettin' him to take any pride in his clothes," murmured Adela disconsolately, only to add: "But there, it's better so than that he should be as full o' vanity as his cousin Lady Dorothy. Them conceited children are really horrid and no one likes 'em."

Little Sir Bernard's mother was waiting for him on the narrow foot path, which skirted the top of the beach, and was dignified by the appellation of "Parade" by the inhabitants of Shellbeach-by-the-Sea. She looked so young and so pretty, standing there in the sunshine, in her light summer dress, that her little boy could not help telling her how lovely she was.

"I should think you're the beautifulest lady in the world, muvvy," he said earnestly.

Lady Bentinck laughed merrily, but a pleased look came into her eyes as she turned them on her boy.

His simple, childish flattery sounded sweetly in her ears. He was very dear to her, this only child of whom she was almost inordinately proud. She was glad for him to have the society of Effie and Jeanie, but sometimes she half feared that they, these children of his own age, were drawing his heart away from her, and not infrequently his naïvely expressed faith in Dr. Allan filled her with jealous misgivings.

"Little flatterer!" she said laughing, and then, her tone growing grave and perhaps a trifle wistful, "but you love me, Bernard, *mon cher*?"

Totally regardless of the crowd of summer visitors, assiduous boatmen, and vigilant, hot-faced donkey boys that thronged the "Parade" little Sir Bernard flung his arms about his beautiful young mother and kissed her affectionately.

"In course I do," he cried. "In course."

And with this protestation, Lady Bentinck was more than satisfied.

Miss Timms was sitting on the Parade reading, when, some half hour later, she saw Lady Bentinck driven up to the hotel in one of the little pony carriages for which Shellbeach-by-the-Sea is celebrated. Lady Bentinck sprang down from the carriage and came across the road to her companion.

"Isn't it a delicious morning?" she said graciously, as she unfurled her poppy-red parasol, and seated herself beside Miss Timms; "So warm and balmy. Really Shellbeach is not a bad little place. We saw Lady Monckton, Bernard's godmother, you know, and got quite five minutes' chat with her. Bernard has gone now for a sail with his bronzed friend the fisherman, in that most wonderful of boats, the *Black-*

Eyed Susan, of which he is always talking. We met the fisherman, and of course Bernard must rush to speak to him, and then the man said he was going out for two or three hours—not more—in his fishing smack, and might ‘little master’ come. Bernard was so eager about it, that I really couldn’t say no, and the fisherman assured me he’d take every care of him. The sea is quite calm to-day.”

“Oh, yes, dear Bernard will enjoy a sail,” Miss Timms answered. “And the fresh breezes will do him good. Besides, from what he has told me of him, I’m sure that fisherman is a thoroughly trustworthy man.”

“He is. When Bernard was chattering of him last night, I made a few enquiries of the hotel people. His people have lived at Shellbeach for years, and are quite respectable. I should not have permitted Bernard to go had I not known this,” concluded Lady Bentinck, with dignity.

“Oh, no, of course not,” Miss Timms said hastily. She was, however, somewhat troubled by the consciousness that little Sir Bernard invariably got his own way in things great and small when it rested with Lady Bentinck to give and to withhold.

“He won’t be back to lunch,” Lady Bentinck presently remarked. “I told Alphonse to make him up a packet of sandwiches to take with him. He seemed to be possessed of some vague idea with regard to captain’s biscuits, but I insisted upon the sandwiches.”

“And wisely,” murmured Miss Timms, whose duty in life it was to acquiesce; a rather fatiguing duty sometimes this poor lady found it.

"Bernard is far easier to manage than he used to be," Lady Bentinck said presently. "Adela says he is very good with her, and I'm sure you yourself must have noticed how seldom he flies into tempers now-a-days. He used to be so passionate and impatient, a regular little firebrand, but now—oh, he's quite a model of good behavior. It is truly a wondrous change. I suppose we have to thank the influence of Rose Villa for it?" She glanced rather sharply at her companion.

"Bernard has undoubtedly a great respect and liking for Dr. Allan," Miss Timms answered thoughtfully. "And yes, I have certainly remarked, and with pleasure, the change you mention. Bernard has always been a dear, sweet boy, and so good to me, but he has improved of late; he is more patient, more thoughtful for others."

"And for this we have to thank the influence of Rose Villa?" Lady Bentinck repeated her question in a slightly irritated tone.

Miss Timms showed diplomacy.

"I think, dear Lady Bentinck," she said sweetly, "you have been so wise in choosing Dr. Allan's children to be his constant companions. Yes, I am sure the influence of Rose Villa has been a beneficial influence to that darling boy."

Lady Bentinck was disarmed.

"I knew it would be," she said complacently. "I am tolerably discerning and I felt convinced the first moment I saw those children that they were just the companions Bernard needed. They are dear little girls. I'm glad I brought them to the sea with us. Their society is a great joy to Bernard, and I'm sure

their naïve and innocent pleasure in everything is simply charming."

To this Miss Timms agreed with great heartiness.

"They're a delightful little pair—Bernard's Midsummer fairies," she said.

* * * * *

"The sky's very cloudy. Alphonse says it's going to rain. I hope Bernie will come in soon, for if not, I 'spect he'll get wet," Effie said, with some concern to Lady Bentinck, when the two little girls joined their elders at the table d'hôte luncheon an hour later.

Lady Bentinck turned to a window that was just behind her as she sat at the table.

"It is cloudy," she exclaimed, "and the clouds seem to have come up so suddenly. It was beautifully bright when Bernard started, you know. I wish I had made him take his macintosh, but I had no idea that rain was coming."

"Ah, madame! but the storm it come up here quick—exceeding quick," remarked the always conversational Alphonse, as he handed a salad. He was not consolatory, but he beamed amiably upon the company in general, and seemed to think he had said just the right thing.

Effie saw an anxious little pucker on pretty Lady Bentinck's smooth brow, and hastened to reassure her.

"Bernie's fisherman is sure to bring him back d'reckly he sees it's going to be stormy," she said cheerfully.

Soon it began to rain. Alphonse was just bringing round the clotted cream and fresh-plucked fruit when the first drops fell. Both cream and fruit were pro-

ducts of the farm on the hill, that belonged to the hotel, and the children thought them delicious, but Effie couldn't enjoy her helping on this occasion. From her place at the table she could see the dark clouds overhead growing denser and thicker every moment. She felt sure that a great storm was coming, and she thought anxiously of little Bernard far out at sea.

The rain fell heavily, plashing down upon the verandah of the hotel and making a great noise. Luncheon was over and Lady Bentinck went to the window and looked out apprehensively. Her face grew very grave when she saw that the sea that had been so smooth and blue and glittering in the morning sunlight, but two hours before, was grey and sullen now, and that the waves were breaking roughly on the sandy shore, and tossing a spray of white foam about the green, weed-hung rocks.

"There's going to be a terrific storm, I'm sure," she said. "I wonder where my boy is."

"P'raps he's in the fisherman's boat-house, waiting till the rain's over," Jeanie suggested.

"You had better run away and play upstairs, and Effie too. You can do no good here," Lady Bentinck said sharply.

Jeanie glanced at her in surprise.

"I think she's cross," she whispered to Effie as they obediently left the room. "I never saw her cross before. I don't like cross people."

"She's *anxious*," Effie said. "People often seem cross when they're anxious, they can't help it, poor things." Effie was a wise little person and an observant one.

"Let's sort our shells—the shells we collected this morning," Jeanie suggested, as the little girls entered the private sitting room that Lady Bentinck had taken for them and Bernard, a nice room, with a sea view, where they could romp about, and enjoy a good game with as much freedom as though they were at home.

Adela was sitting in the window. She was supposed to be sewing, but her work had fallen to the floor, and she was gazing out anxiously at the sweeping rain, and the dark, angry sea.

"I'm worried more than I can tell you, Miss Effie," she said, turning quickly as the children came into the room. "My mind misgives me about little Sir Bernard. There's not a fishing boat in sight, and just look at the rough waves, it's dreadfully stormy."

Suddenly a bright flash of lightning darted across the window, and Adela and the little girls sprang back. Then a loud rumble of thunder echoed through the sultry, storm-charged air. The storm had begun, and it beat with all its fury upon the rocky northern coast.

Jeanie spoke no more of sorting shells. Even her careless nature was impressed by this great storm the like of which she had never beheld.

"It—it frightens me," she whispered to Effie in rather a shaky voice.

Effie looked at her in surprise.

"It seems," Jeanie whispered, her little face paling, "as if God were angry. Don't you see what I mean Effie? The storm's so *awful*, that flashing lightning, and the loud-echoing thunder. Do you think it means that God is angry?"

"I hope not, I hope not."

"You know, Effie—I'm often naughty—I—oh! Effie d'you think God is angry with *me*?"

Jeanie was in a panic of childish terror. She broke into tears, and sank down upon the floor, covering her face with her hands.

"But you're sorry Jeanie, you're sorry you've been naughty. And God forgives us when we're sorry, the Bible says so," Effie said and she put her arms around her sister and tried to comfort her with the tender words and caresses that her loving little heart suggested.

"I'm sorry now," Jeanie sobbed. "Now that the storm's so frightening. But when all is bright, and sunny, and fine, I think I forget how naughty I've been an' so—an' so I'm not sorry as I ought to be!" So this little one expressed in her simple fashion the weakness of poor human nature.

But Effie was comforting.

"God is so kind," she said. "So very, very kind—even kinder than papa. Papa-forgives us when we're naughty, you know, Jeanie, and so God must do so too, I think, 'cos the Bible says he loves us. An' I'm *sure* he loves us, for he gives us so many good things an' happy things, an' best of all, papa to take care of us."

"An' p'raps, Effie," Jeanie suggested more hopefully, "p'raps mother in heaven has told God how that we are only little children and can't always be good." She brushed away her tears as she spoke and there was no more terror in her pretty little face, only faith, the faith of a simple child in its heavenly father.

* * * * *

The storm lashed on through the summer's afternoon and still raged with unabated fury when the shadows of evening fell. Such a storm had not been known on that coast for many a year, so the fisher folk told each other, and they spoke anxiously of the fishing smacks that had put out to sea before the storm descended, and wondered how it fared with them.

Soon it became known that a small visitor from the hotel, one Sir Bernard Bentinck, had sailed in one of those fishing boats, a certain brown-sailed smack called the *Black-Eyed Susan*, and the kindly sympathetic fisher folk were full of compassion for the little Baronet, and the young mother whose only child he was. In the midst of their anxiety for the husbands and the sons who were also exposed to the dangers of the violent storm they found time to speak of this boy, no older than their own little ones, whose young life was in such peril.

"He's a bonny wee fellow," one old fisherman said. "I've seen him here, on the sand, a' talkin' wi' Jake. Jake's one o' the ill-fated sort, an' misfortun' seems to track his footsteps. 'Taint two year yet sin' his wife an' child were took, an' now 'twill be little less nor a miracle if he an' the little gentleman ain't drowned in yonder hungry, gapin' sea. Wotever chance have a bit o' a smack like the *Black-Eyed Susan* in such a storm as this. She's a smart craft enough, but them there waves will break clean over her. You say as you hears the lady at the hotel is in a sad takin' about her boy, an' well she may be, fur if she sees him alive agin', I don't know this coast, that's all."

He was the oldest fisherman there, and had seen

Jake's boat-house when it had been launched for the first time years before, and its owner had boasted, without fear of contradiction, that it was the best fishing smack at Shellbeach-by-the-Sea. The women trembled when they heard his words, and drew their sun-tanned, bare-legged little ones closer to them, and thanked God that they held them safe. They did not doubt that old Philip was right in his dismal prophecy.

But up at the hotel, in a quiet and darkened room, wherein Lady Bentinck sobbed out her despair, and Miss Timms hovered about her in helpless solicitude, little Effie Allan softly turned the leaves of the book she had learned to love, and read aloud, what seemed to little Sir Bernard's mother a message straight from heaven.

"And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

"And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow : and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish ?

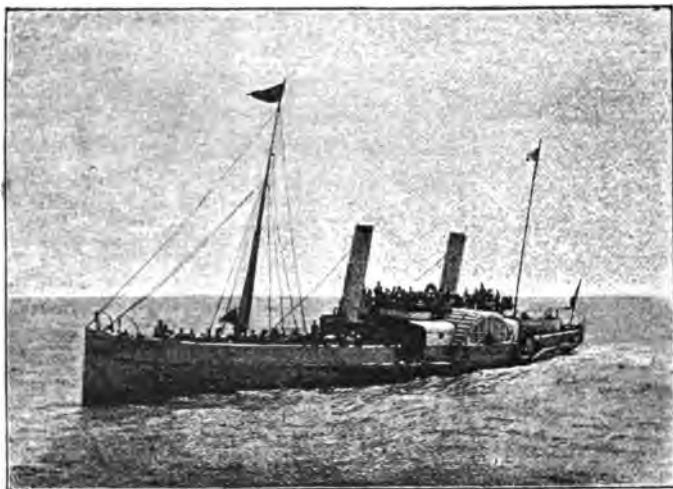
"And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

"And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful ? how is it that ye have no faith ?"

Effie laid down the Bible, and turned to little Sir Bernard's mother.

"Dear, *dearest* Lady Bentinck," she said, and stooped to put her childish lips to the pale, tear-stained face. "Jeanie, an' me found that little true story, an' read it together, an' then we thought p'raps it would comfort you to hear it. An' Jeanie an' me

have prayed Jesus to say now 'Peace, be still,' an' we think he will—we're *sure* he will, 'cos it's written in the Bible—they are Jesus's own words," and the little head bent reverently at the sacred title, "'If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.'"



THE TOURIST STEAMER

CHAPTER XXI.

A SAIL AND A STORM.

"A little ship was on the sea,
It was a charming sight;
It sailed along so pleasantly,
And all was calm and bright.

* * * * *

And faith—O, is not faith,
Like thee, too, lily, springing into light
Still buoyantly above the billows' might,
Through the storm's breath."

—HEMANS.

THE morning was fine and fair when the *Black-Eyed Susan* unfurled her big brown sails and danced



Little Sir Bernard's mother was waiting for him.



out over the rippling, sparkling sea, as gaily as some bird upon the wing. The sky above her was blue, deep, deep blue, and the waves below were blue, and the sun was shining high in the summer heavens, as though he must shine for ever, laughing at storm and tempest and wintry weather.

The *Black-Eyed Susan* was the trimmest craft ever moored in the lovely bay of Shellbeach-by-the-Sea, and the pride of her owner's heart.

The bronzed face of little Sir Bernard's fisher friend was beaming with satisfaction as he let out the sails that were to bear the small visitor out to sea, and he said :

" You've a fine mornin' fur yer trip, sir, a brave fine mornin'! I'm main glad as yer honored mother saw fit to let you come along."

" Yes," said Bernard, brightly. " So am I. I only wish she'd come too."

" The boat smells a bit from the herrings an' sich like ; p'raps a lady 'd not fancy it," the owner of the *Black-Eyed Susan* remarked deprecatingly.

" I like the smell of the fish and of the tar," said the little Baronet. " It's a clean, fresh sort of smell, like the sea. And how the boat flies along, Mr. Fisherman, so fast and light over the little blue waves ! Are you going to catch any fish this morning ? "

" No, sir. I be just a goin' to take ye for a sail. We'll go 'long the bay to Witch's Point. 'Tis a pretty run."

The *Black-Eyed Susan*, with a buoyant little breeze filling her picturesque brown sails, raced past fishing smacks and so called " pleasure boats " as though she threw at them the challenge, " catch me who can," and

people turned to gaze curiously at the two she carried, the big, bronzed seaman in his rough fisher dress and the little boy who sat in the stern, his pretty, childish face full of eager interest, his shrill young voice calling many questions to his attentive companion. They seemed to more than one who saw them, a strangely assorted pair of friends. Little Sir Bernard, quite unconscious of the curious scrutiny to which he was subjected, felt perfectly content and happy, and his merry, musical laugh echoed blithely over the rippling waves.

"Did you ever see a mermaid, Mr. Fisherman?" he asked.

The owner of the *Black-Eyed Susan* replied that, "so far as he knew of, he never had, but that he was blest if he knew what a mermaid was. Some kind of queer foreign fish he supposed. 'Them Germans' always gave such outlandish names to everything."

"A mermaid's a sea-fairy," the little Baronet told him. "A fairy that lives in the water and has a tail, like the fishes, 'stead of wings, like the land fairies."

"Aye, an' do you hold wi' fairies, sir?" the fisherman gravely asked.

"In course. But I've never seen one. They don't like me, 'cos I'm a town-boy, an' they only like country children. That's not very kind of them, but I try not to mind."

"You reads of 'em in books, I suppose?"

"Yes, I love fairy books. Did you ever have a fairy book?"

"Not as I remembers. I've only got two books, the Bible an' the History of England. I often reads the first, but I don't keer partickler for the second; there's

long, hard words in it wot I don't understand. I didn't get much learnin' when I was a child, you see, sir. Edication weren't thought so much of then as it is now."

"Dr. Allan says that some children are so clever that they don't believe in fairies. I shouldn't care for that sort of cleverness," Bernard remarked. "'Sides, it's hard for the fairies. They'll feel it very much. They love people—children most, I s'pose, and they always try to be good to them; an' if everyone says they're make-up nonsense to 'muse babies, of course they'll be vexed, and they'll just fly right away to fairyland. That would be bad, for we'd have no more pretty dreams. When the children are asleep, the fairies come and carry them off to fairyland, you know. That's the land of dreams."

The fisherman looked at his little companion meditatively.

"It's queer fancies as them children gets into their heads," he said slowly.

"The mermaids play on harps made o' shells, with strings of seaweed; they come up to the top of the sea an' play to the fishermen sometimes at night," continued Bernard. "They play very nice. I wish I could hear their music. It's fairy music. Mr. Fisherman, if you sit very, very quiet, an' listen *awful* hard, one night when you're out at sea, in the *Black-Eyed Susan*, p'raps you'll hear them."

And the fisherman, with commendable gravity, said that perhaps he should.

"Theer's the Witch's Point, sir," he remarked presently, and pointed to a piece of high white cliff that jutted out into the sea, rising straight and perpendic-

ular from the placid blue waters. "The rocks round about it is main dangerous. A boat were wrecked off there, a collier 'twere, that's a coal ship ye knows, sir, like that are over yonder. Afore help could get to them, the crew had all gone, every man aboard, to Davy Jones' locker."

"Where's Davy Jones' locker?"

"'Tis the place where folks go as is drowned. Many a poor fisherman takes his last rest down there, sir. There's a deal o' risk in a fisher's life on this here north coast, a deal o' risk."

The child's face grew very grave.

"Don't people who are drowned go to heaven?" he asked.

The fisherman looked doubtful, and scratched his ear, reflectively.

"I don't rightly know, sir. We always sez, in these parts, as they've gone to Davy Jones' locker; but I guess they'll be fetched out o' it that day, wot the Bible speaks of—'when the sea gives up her dead.'"

"But why does Mr.—er—what's the name? Oh! Davy Jones. Why does he want to keep the poor drowned people? I think it's nasty of him."

"Oh, he ain't over nice. There's no sayin' he is. I only hopes as I'll never find my way to his locker," the fisherman said.

"I'm sure I hope so, too!" Bernard exclaimed.

"Are ye tired, sir; or shall I put on a bit further? The village o' Sandystone lies just beyond the Witch's Point. You might like to see it—for most o' the houses theer, be made o' old boats like mine. 'Tis a fishin' village, and scarce any but fisher folk bide there."

"Oh, I'm not a bit tired. I'd like to see it!" cried the little boy.

So on the *Black-Eyed Susan* flew, like the dainty craft she was, and, when she had headed the Witch's Point, there was Sandystone, as quaint a village as one might wish to see, a little colony of boat-houses, nestling at the base of a rugged cliff, with the miniature spire of the tiniest church ever built standing out white and distinct against a background of tangled furze and heather.

"It's like a toy village," said Bernard, standing in the stern of the fishing smack. "It's so funny and small."

"There ain't much of it, certingly," the fisherman answered. "It don't come up to Shellbeach-by-the-Sea, wot's got its pier an' hotel, an' sich like," he added, proudly. "It does a brisk fish trade, though. We'll turn about now, sir, if yer ready. I promised yer honored mother that ye'd not been out more nor two hours."

"The breeze has gone, I think," Bernard said, presently. "We're not goin' so fast as we were. Look at the sails, they're all loose an' floppy."

"The wind's dropped. There's a thunder shower a-comin', I'm afeard," answered the fisherman, pulling energetically at mysterious ropes. "If it rains, sir, you must wrap one o' they sack cloths about ye. I'll be busy wi' the boat." He glanced up at the sky as he spoke, and rather anxiously. Dark clouds had stolen up all unnoticed by him as he talked to his little companion, and he knew by the general aspect of things that a storm was near, one of those sudden and often violent storms that make a fisher's life on

the north coast of England full of danger and risk. He reproached himself that, absorbed by the child, he had neglected that vigilant observation of sea and sky that was part of his trade, and he exerted himself to the utmost so to manipulate the sails that the *Black-Eyed Susan* might run into the sheltered bay of Shell-beach-by-the-Sea ere the storm broke.

But a dead calm had set in, the sullen dead calm that so often is the forerunner of tempest, and no welcome breeze filled the sails of the fishing-boat. The *Black-Eyed Susan* drifted as heavily as some crippled barge doomed for firewood, and the brown sails, that had erewhile spread themselves as bravely as the wings of a buoyant bird, hung loose and useless. The fisherman was forced to take them in. There was nothing for it but to keep still and wait for the breaking of the storm. No alternative presented itself.

"D'you mind a storm, little gentleman? Be ye afeard o' the thunder?" he asked.

"No," said Bernard, "I'm not afraid of anythin', 'cos I'm a boy," and he lifted his small head proudly. "Boys must never be afraid!"

"Aye, that's right speakin'," cried the fisherman, with an admiring glance at the little slight, childish figure and the innocent, pretty face with its baby contours. "That's like a man, that is."

"There was one thing I used to be frightened of," Bernard told him. "An' that's the dark. I didn't like Adela to take away the lamp when I went to bed at night, you know. But I'm not frightened of that any more, 'cos I know now that God sends his angels to take care o' little children when it's dark at night, an' they won't let any harm come near them."

The fisherman nodded understandingly.

"Aye, that's what my boy used to say, my boy whose likeness I showed you. There was a verse he learnt, I minds it still :

" ' Four corners to my bed,
Four angels at the head,
Two to watch, one to pray,
And one to bear my soul away.' "

"Yes," said the little Baronet, "I read that once, I 'member. Look at those great big clouds, Mr. Fisherman. They near cover the sky."

"The storm's about to break. Wrap that there sack about you, sir, 'twill keep you dry. Ah! here's the rain."

Down the rain came in torrents, thick, blinding, heavy rain, and at the same moment the wind suddenly rose, striking across the sea like a hurricane, the sea that had been so smooth and blue this morning, and was rough and tumultuous now. The waves lashed upon the fishing smack, and driven over on one side by the wind, it drifted helplessly in the teeth of the storm.

"You hold on—hold on," the fisherman called anxiously to little Sir Bernard, and his voice seemed to come from afar off, so noisy was the wind, this hurricane of wind that had suddenly sprung up.

A roar of thunder echoed across the sea like the firing of many great guns, and the darkened sky was opened by a vivid, fiery flash of fork lightning. The big waves caught the little boat and tossed it about as though it were a plaything.

"Mr. Fisherman," Bernard called, in a rather shaky

voice, "d'you think we're goin' to Davy Jones' locker, please?"

Jake was down on his hands and knees, baling water out of the rocking, curvetting boat.

"Don't you be afeard, sir," he shouted back breathlessly. "Never say die. Theer's still a chance as some bigger craft may pass by an' take us off o' this. Just you hang on tight, an' say your prayers."

"I'm not afraid," the little fellow declared valiantly, as he clung on to the boat with wet and slippery fingers. He set his teeth, and tried to behave "like a man," although the *Black-Eyed Susan* was rushing on before the storm with terrible leaps and bounds, and the waves that broke over the stern had soaked his clothes till he was wet through to the skin.

"If I go to Davy Jones' locker, I hope my mother won't mind very much," he continued, a slight quiver in his shrill, childish voice. "I'd like to have seen her just for a minute, to say good-bye, an' to tell her once more how much I love her, but I'm goin' to be brave if I can. 'Tisn't very easy to be brave, but I keep askin' God to help me. Do I—do I look frightened an' babyish, please, Mr. Fisherman?"

His companion could not but smile, even at that moment of danger, at the anxious tone in which this enquiry was put.

"You're as game a little chap as ever I see," he answered heartily. "An' that's the truth."

"I'm glad you think so, 'cos you're a brave man, an' must know," little Sir Bernard cried, with much earnestness. "Oh! what a lot of water's come in."

"It's all up, little one," said the fisherman despairingly. "That wave's broke into the side, an' we're

bound to sink. Ah! 'tis just my luck to a' brought you into this. How I wish I'd never set eyes on ye this mornin'!" he added, in a very bitter tone.

"I'm askin' God to save us, I keep askin' him. I think he will," the child told him simply. "You ask him too, please."

"I have, I have. Hold on, boy, hold on. Ah! here's the end."

The fisherman groaned rather for the child than for himself, and as the boat reeled over under a great booming wave that might have crushed a stronger vessel, he caught the little Baronet in his arms and sprang clear of the craft into the surging waters. Bernard struck the sea foam from his face breathlessly; it half choked him. A shrill whistle rang out sharply above the noise of the wind and the waves and the echoing thunder. He saw a great, dark thing looming down upon them, and thought of the Bible story of Jonah and the whale. He heard, as in a dream, the fisherman say, "'Tis the tourist steamer," and then a volume of water swept over his head, and he knew no more.

* * * * *

What a strong perfume of eau de cologne!

"Please don't put the c'clone in my eye, it makes it smart."

"He's coming round, Dr. Stone."

"My dear lady, I had not the slightest doubt as to his coming round. That's right, my little fellow, sit up. You've not much wrong with you. No bones broken, you know."

"Let me put some of this on your forehead?"

"C'loner? No, thank you. Why am I here? What's happened? Oh! I 'member now, the wave turned the boat over," little Sir Bernard added, as a vivid recollection of the recent catastrophe suddenly flashed into his mind. "But I thought the whale swallowed us up, same as Jonah, you know." He looked about the comfortable saloon of the tourist steamer wonderingly.

"Funny little boy!" cried the pretty young lady, who was leaning over him. "But isn't he pretty? isn't he a *darling*, Dr. Stone?" And she caught the dripping little figure in her arms, and kissed him caressingly.

Little Sir Bernard gently but firmly extricated himself from her embrace.

"I'm gettin' rather big to be kissed, I think," he expostulated mildly. "An I'm *awful* wet, you'll spoil your pretty frock. An' please, where's Mr. Fisherman? I feel rather anxious about Mr. Fisherman. He hasn't gone to Davy Jones' locker, has he?"

The gentleman addressed as Dr. Stone laughed.

"Not this time, little chap," he said. "But he's lying down for a bit, he got a bit knocked about by those big waves we fished you out of. He'll be right enough soon. He's your father, I suppose?"

"No, he's a friend o' mine. Where are you goin' to take us, please?"

"The steamer's bound for Shellbeach-by-the-Sea. Where's your home?"

"Oh, we're stayin' at Shellbeach, so that's all right, thank you. How 'lighted my mother will be to see me. I'm afraid she's drefful nervous about me."

"Here's the stewardess with some dry clothes for you," Dr. Stone said. "But first you must drink this

hot stuff to prevent your taking cold from the ducking you've had."

"Do you often get caught in a storm when you're out in the fishing-boat, little boy?" the pretty young lady asked curiously.

"I've never been out in it before," Bernard answered. "My mother an' me live in London. I'd rather not drink this, please, doctor, I'm quite well now."

"Drink it, nevertheless. Prevention is better than cure."

The doctor held the glass to the little boy's lips, and he could no longer refuse. When he had swallowed its contents, he felt very drowsy, so drowsy that, when the doctor and the pretty young lady had gone away, saying that they should see him again by-and-by, and the stewardess, who seemed a kind, good-natured woman, had divested him of his soaked garments, and arranged him in a somewhat patchy costume that had been selected from numerous and various contributions, he lay down on the cushioned seat of the saloon and fell fast asleep.

It was evening when he awoke, and a lamp was swinging in the doorway of the saloon. The doctor was standing by the side of the couch, looking down upon him.

"You're all right now, little chap, aren't you?" he said kindly.

"I'm quite well, thank you," Bernard answered. "But the hot stuff you gave me sent me to sleep."

"And did you all the good in the world. Yes, come in, Miss Sinclair, your small protégé is awake, and as jolly as the proverbial cricket."

The pretty young lady came in laughing, and Bernard's fisherman followed, cap in hand, and looking somewhat overcome by the presence of "the quality."

"Mr. Fisherman," cried little Sir Bernard, stretching out his hands to him eagerly. "I wasn't frightened, or babyish, was I?"

"You behaved like a man, sir," said Jake.

"I'm glad of that, I'm *awful* glad of that," exclaimed the child, a soft flush dyeing his pretty, little face.

"He's positively charming, Doctor Stone!" cried the young lady. "I *must* kiss him, I really must!"

"You may if you like," little Sir Bernard said resignedly. He was so glad to think that he should soon see his mother, and Jeanie, and Effie, and Miss Timms again, that he felt the least he could do was to be gracious to these kind people, although it was below one's dignity to be called "charming," and be kissed and petted as though he were a baby, instead of "a great big boy of seven."

Jake stood in the doorway, looking very sheepish. "He weren't used to the company of his betters," he told Bernard afterwards.

Little Sir Bernard no longer felt giddy and confused, as he had upon first recovering consciousness. The hot wine and water, and the long sleep, had done him good, and he was ready to chatter to the doctor and the pretty young lady and the stewardess, and to laugh with them at the funny garments, of varied hues, that were many sizes too large for him. And presently the captain came in, and the pretty young lady's mother, who was a very fat old lady, and called Bernard a "poor little dear," and patted him a great

many times on the head, and kept sniffing at a big bottle of salts, "to counteract the rocking motion of the steamer," as she explained.

The captain said :

"It's a good thing for you, young shaver, that my boat came by when it did."

And Bernard answered yes, it was a good thing, indeed, for if it hadn't, he supposed he'd have gone down to Davy Jones' locker, and never have come up again.

Then the young lady pounced upon him, and insisted upon kissing him again and the stewardess said, "Bless the poor innocent, 'tis a mercy's he's spared," and the young lady's mother patted him on the head vigorously.

They made so much fuss over him, all these kind people, that little Sir Bernard felt quite overcome, and he was not sorry when a big bell rang, and the paddle wheels stopped, and Dr. Stone said that the steamer must have reached the pier at Shellbeach-by-the-Sea. Dr. Stone and the ladies, and most of the passengers were going on to a larger and more fashionable seaside resort further down the coast, so they had to bid Bernard "good-bye." They came up on deck with him, and when he waved his hand to them from the pier, they all waved in return, and called to him, "Good-bye, good-bye, little Sir Bernard," and he could hear the pretty young lady saying to Dr. Stone :

"What a sweet, dear little boy."

They were very kind, he thought, and he said so to Jake, as they hurried through the dusky twilight to the hotel on the beach.

The big fisherman nodded.

"I guess as most is kind to you, little master," he said.

"They're very kind," the child answered. "Only they *will* treat me as if I was a baby, an' I don't like that. I want to be manly an' brave. I'm tryin' to be." He looked up at his companion rather wistfully.

Jake smiled. "They're none o' 'em doubtin' as how you're a plucky little chap, sir; that's just what takes 'em!"

Then suddenly he sprang forward. "Ah! here we are at the hotel. I must go to muvvy at once—at once." He darted away up the steps, and left Jake to make his report to the proprietor of the hotel, who came bustling out of the hall, full of importance and concern at the return of these two whom all had given up for lost.

Worn out with weeping, Lady Bentinck had fallen into a feverish, restless sleep. Miss Timms had persuaded her to lie down upon a couch, in her room; hoping for this result, and had presently stolen away to consult anxiously with Adela and the little girls. So Bernard found his mother alone, and it was his soft kisses that recalled her to consciousness.

A look of joy and thankfulness lighted up her tear-stained countenance, when her eyes opened on his pretty little eager face.

"Oh, my darling?" she cried. "My own boy, is it really you?"

"Yes, muvvy, I've come safe back to you. God took care of me," said little Sir Bernard, with his arms about her neck.



LITTLE BROWN-SAILED FISHING SMACKS.

CHAPTER XXII.

“GOOD-BYE MIDSUMMER FAIRIES!”

“Oh! let me still

Write thee great God, and me a child,

Let me be soft and subtle to thy will,

Small to myself, to others mild,

Be hither ill!”

—GEORGE HERBERT.

How the happy days of a child's holiday fly by, when summer's gracious halo of sunshine lies upon land and sea, and the little one is not too old to enjoy wading in the cool waters, racing with the tiny wavelets, and digging castles innumerable in the soft, light sand!

A child finds so much joy on the seashore, so wide

a scope for innocent fancies, and bright imaginings. There are, to his young eyes, all undimmed by the troubles and the sophistries of the world, wonders in the little common shells that may be gathered by the handful, and are as plentiful as the stones of the beach, and he thinks the sticky green seaweed, and the tiny limpets and crabs that he finds among the slippery, jagged rocks, beautiful. It is happiness to him to watch the little brown-sailed fishing smacks coming home across the rippling waters, and the big, golden sun sinking to rest in the far margin of the deep blue sea. The shell he holds to his ear, listening breathlessly erewhile, whispers to him wondrous secrets of the ocean, of mermaids who dwell in fairy caverns at the bottom of the sea, and of the treasures divers find, and of many, many things that only a child may dream of. The little waves, breaking gently, one after another upon the sandy shore, tell him the same tales, and the sea gulls' weird, wild cry, seems to him to say, "It's all true, all true."

Little Sir Bernard, and Dr. Allan's children were "as happy as the day is long" at Shellbeach-by-the-Sea, which seemed to them a perfect fairyland. Their small spades made havoc with the soft sand, they galloped over the beach mounted on frisky, light-heeled donkeys, they waded among the rocks, collecting shells and pebbles, and watching, with much interest the miniature crabs, that humanity forbade them to take from their congenial, watery home. They climbed the rugged cliffs, and sailed in the *Black-Eyed Susan*, which happily had been less injured by her adventures than they supposed. For after a little "patching" it was as smart a smack as

ever. They went to tea too, in Jake's funny little boat-house on the shore, and listened to reminiscences of "the little one wot was gone," and to brighter stories relating to the various adventures of the *Black-Eyed Susan*, and her master. There was altogether plenty of fun and amusement, and morning never dawned too soon for these small people, while bedtime came all too early to please them.

"I really can't believe," Jeanie said one morning at breakfast, "that we've been here a month, an' that papa's comin' to-day to fetch us home, I'd just like to begin the month once more, an' have it all over again."

"I'd like to have it all 'cept that day when the *Black-Eyed Susan* was turned over," little Sir Bernard remarked.

"Oh, my darling child, pray don't speak of that time!" cried his pretty young mother, holding up her jewelled hands.

"I'm sorry—awf'ly sorry to leave here, an' Lady Bentinck and Bernie, and Miss Timms, besides the beautiful, beautiful sea," said Effie. "But I'll be glad to see papa again. I'm sure papa must have missed us."

"He's been away, in London, most of the time," Jeanie remarked in her careless way.

Effie looked rather wistful.

"I think he'll be glad to have us home again," she said.

"Of course he will, my dear, there's no doubt of that," exclaimed Lady Bentinck, kindly. "And now, small people, be off, and make the most of your last morning on the shore."

They needed no second bidding. The day was

warm and sunny, although it was now early September. Inland, at drowsy Bumbleton and other country places, that great painter Autumn was painting the woods with his ruddy colors, and laying tints of pure gold upon the harvest fields, but here, by the sea, it was still summer.

The children made a great sand castle, surrounded by a moat. It was high and firm, being based with big stones, and, when the tide began to come in, they stood upon it and let the waves flow past them. This, they thought a charming amusement and it occupied them all until Jake came sauntering down the beach, his big pipe in his mouth, and little Sir Bernard ran off, saying he "must help him mend his nets."

Effie and Jeanie were hot from playing in the sun. They sat down beside Adela and took off their big linen hats and fanned their pink little faces with them. Chum was hot, too; he stretched himself flat upon the sand and hung out a red tongue. He had been enjoying his favorite game of "scratch hole," a pastime which he pursued daily, with unflagging energy.

"There's the little girl we saw yesterday, Jeanie," Effie presently remarked. "The poor little invalid girl, you know."

"Yes, it's her," Jeanie agreed, ungrammatically, but with a good deal of interest in her tone, "poor little thing! She must have a dull time, sitting there in her basket-chair, while the other children from the convalescent home play about. All the rest can get about somehow, an' play on the shore, even the little boy who hobbles on crutches, and has such a thin, white face. If I were that little girl I'd feel cross, I

shouldn't like to be left alone. I think the nurse who comes on the beach with them ought to stay with her."

"Oh, she couldn't. She has to take care of the very little ones an' see they don't hurt themselves playin' about," said Effie. "But let's go an' talk to that little girl, Jeanie. I think it would be kind."

"P'raps she won't like it. I daresay she's shy," Jeanie objected.

"We're only little girls, though, she'd not be shy with us."

Jeanie looked meditatively at the child in the basket-chair. The other children from the convalescent home had wandered away down by the water's edge, accompanied by the nurse in charge, and this little one was left alone. She was a little, pale-faced London child, with short-cropped hair and great dark eyes. She lay back upon the cushions that supported her emaciated, small form, and watched the waves as they broke upon the beach with a happy and contented look upon her attenuated features.

"Come and speak to her," Effie said, rising to her feet.

Jeanie was hot, and although the poor little invalid moved her to interest and pity, she felt that conversation would, at this moment, be an effort. She got up rather unwillingly and followed her sister.

The little sick child turned her head quickly when Effie and Jeanie approached her, and a smile curved her pale lips when she looked upon their bright, rosy faces.

"We've come to talk to you 'cos we thought you must find it dull lying here alone, while the other children are at play," Effie said gently.

"Thank you," answered the little one, gratefully, "but I ain't never dull here; I'm just as happy as happy can be. I never saw the sea 'fore yesterday, an' it's just so lovely an' wonderful that I could lie an' look at it fur ever." An eager flush dyed her white cheek as she spoke.

"You're staying at the Children's Convalescent Home, aren't you?" Effie asked. "It's a very nice house; we went there one day with Miss Timms and took the children some toys an' books."

"Yes, ain't it a beautiful place," said the sick child, quickly. "Such a comfortable cot they gives you, an' dinners, oh, my! such dinners, gravy an' taters, an' all. The guilds, they sended me here, they're some kind ladies in London, where I lives. I had the fever awful bad—awful, an' when I come out o' hospital they says to mother, they says, 'your little girl shall go down to a nice house by the sea for a week, we'll see to that.' They're very good, the guilds is."

"They must be," Effie remarked. "An' I 'spect you'll soon get better at this nice place, little girl. What's your name? I don't think you've told us that."

"My name's Allie—Allie Sims, an' I lives in Hope Court, wi' mother an' the boys. Mother goes out charin' she do, and sometimes of evenin's the boys sells papers, sometimes flowers. Daytime they has to go to school, 'cos if not the Board is arter mother. I goes to school, too, when I'm well. I've been sick a long time. They cut all my hair orf in hospital. 'Why, they has made ye look quite like a boy,' mother says when she sees me."

Allie Sims was a little chatterbox, the children

found, and a merry chatterbox too. Such a plucky, happy little being, was this wee London child, who was still too weak to move from her basket-chair, and whose pale thin face presented a striking contrast to the rosy countenances of Effie and Jeanie. She might have served as a living lesson of contentment to many a more favored child.

"I likes to sit here a-lookin' at the sea," she said "an' a-listenin' to them waves, splash, splashin' on the shore. They seems to sing a song to me. What's the song about? I mayn't tell you that, it's a secret. It's the sea's secret."

"But don't you want to run about with the other children?" Jeanie could not help asking her.

"No, no." The little one shook her close-cropped head. "I's happy here, quite happy."

Just then the nurse who was in charge of the children came up.

"It's very kind of you to talk to Allie," she said to Effie and Jeanie. "She's such a good, contented child and never complained, when she lay sick for many, many weeks. The guilds at our headquarters in London sent her down here, but unfortunately they can only afford for her to stay a week. There are so many little children needing rest and change, you see, and although the guilds work hard they can't do what they would for them. We are so sorry about Allie, because we all feel that she wants at least a fortnight at the sea. She is so weak and thin, poor little one, from her long and severe illness, and in her own home she can't have the good food and fresh air she really requires."

She glanced regretfully at Allie as she spoke. She

had many little children to care for, and Allie was only one of the many. But she loved the Christian work in which she was engaged, and in her kindly heart was a special place for each one of the little ones and a constant remembrance of that divine command, "Feed my lambs." So, very willingly, she tended these

" Ragged children with bare feet,
Whom the angels in white raiment,
Know the names of to repeat,
When they come to you for payment,"

nor looked for reward here.

"Would it cost much to give Allie another week at the sea?" Effie asked rather shyly.

"About ten shillings," was the answer.

Effie and Jeanie exchanged a quick glance.

"Could we——?" Effie began.

"I should like to," said Jeanie unhesitatingly.

"We have a little money—saved up in our money boxes," Effie explained shyly to the nurse, "I—I think both together we must have ten shillings. May we give it please for Allie, so's she can stay the other week by the sea; we'd like to if we may?"

"You are kind little girls," was the smiling answer. "And for little Allie's sake I have no right to refuse what I am sure is a generous offer."

"You see," Effie said, looking up eagerly at the kind face, "we've had a very happy time here, Jeanie an' me, an' we'd like Allie to have a happy time too."

"I see," her new acquaintance replied gently. "Yes, I see, my dear." And the spontaneous generosity of these merry, healthy little people seemed to

encourage her in her work and was as pleasant and refreshing as a fresh breeze is to a tired traveler who tramps some dusty high road, on a hot day.

Allie unconscious of this little episode was watching with eager eyes the fishing boats sailing merrily across the bay and the children climbing over the seaweed covered rocks. It needed no second glance at her pale little face to make Effie and Jeanie satisfied with their promise.

"Good-bye, little Allie," Effie said. "We shan't see you again 'cos we're going home—far away from Shellbeach, to-morrow, but we shall think of you, happy at the seaside."

"An' soon you know, Allie," added Jeanie eagerly, "you'll be much stronger, an' you'll be able to run about an' play with the other children."

Allie smiled up at her.

"I only wants to sit here," she said contentedly. "I's quite happy sittin' here a' watchin' the waves."

"They're kind little ladies," she told her nurse when the children had gone away. "They kissed me very kind, they did."

"They are going to be very good to you, little one," the nurse said. "Thanks to them, you will have a whole fortnight by the sea."

"How lovely!" Allie clasped her little hands enthusiastically. "An' oh my! what a deal the waves will sing to me in that theer time." Her thin face flushed with happiness, "I'll ask God to bless them little ladies when I sez my prayers this night!" she cried.

Effie and Jeanie decided that they would tell no one of their interview with Allie, and its results. They

felt that it was their own happy little secret, and that praise and commendation would rather mar its perfection. The knowledge that Allie would through their intervention spend another week at the sea, another week of fresh air and good food, another week away from her squalid home, was quite thanks enough for them.

Two little money boxes were eagerly opened and their contents as eagerly examined.

Jeanie joyfully proclaimed herself the possessor of five shillings and sixpence.

"I've only four shillings and sixpence," Effie said rather disappointedly, "I gave that poor crossing sweeper sixpence, don't you remember, Jeanie? I'd forgotten that until now."

"It's all right. We shall just make it up between us," responded Jeanie. "Just enough Effie! Well, I am glad. I b'lieve you thought me selfish not to give the crossing sweeper sixpence too, an' p'raps it was selfish. But I'm glad now I didn't, 'cos if I had we'd not have had enough for this," she concluded complacently.

That afternoon "Allie's nurse" received by post a very fat and bulgy envelope. It contained ten shillings in small change, carefully enclosed in a packet, and on a slip of paper attached, was written in a round, neat, childish hand:

"For Allie to have another week by the sea, from two little girls who have had a very happy time at Shellbeach themselves."

* * * * *

"Who's coming for a drive this afternoon?" Lady Bentinck asked at luncheon. "I have ordered a wag-

onette to be round by three o'clock. I want to see Dingly Chine, before I leave this part of the world; it's a charming spot, so I hear."

Bernard and Jeanie were eager to go, nor was Miss Timms loath to join the party, but Effie begged so earnestly to be left at home, "in case papa came by an afternoon train," that Lady Bentinck could only accede to her wish.

"Though I'm sorry for you to miss the pleasant drive, the last drive we shall all have together here, little one," she said, with a kind glance at the child. Effie was a great friend of hers.

"I'd like to be here to welcome papa, if he did come early," Effie told her. "Please let me stay."

"Papa won't come till evening, an' you'll just have stayed at home for nothing," Jeanie said decidedly.

"Indeed, my love, I believe your sister's right," murmured Miss Timms.

"Do come, Effie. I want you to come most awful!" cried little Sir Bernard, who considered this reason all sufficient.

But Effie stayed at home in spite of them all, nor did she regret her decision when she saw the wagonette with its pretty grey horses start off in the afternoon sunshine, little Sir Bernard perched on the box seat, between the coachman and Brace.

The little girl had to pack up the money for Allie, and direct and post it, and when all that was done, it was tea time, and Alphonse came in with a cosy little tray that bore a tempting assortment of cakes and fruit.

It was rather fun to have tea alone for once, especially with Chum to bear her company and share the

cakes. Alphonse too lingered to relate in his funny broken English all the latest items of hotel news, and was even more amusing than usual. His quaintly told anecdotes made his little auditor laugh so much, that she could scarcely peel the fragrant peaches he had brought her.

Effie was sitting on a stile that separated a paddock from the terrace, with Spot, the hotel proprietor's little fox terrier, and Chum was amusing himself by chasing the low-flying swallows across the smooth shadowy lawn beyond, when papa came. His little "home bird" saw the carriage that brought him from the station driven up to the entrance, and, releasing Spot, made a perfect rush for him.

"O papa, darling, how glad I am to see you!"

"And I you, my Effie. Why how brown and well you look, little one! The sea breezes of Shellbeach must, indeed, be healthy. You've grown too, I declare! What a long legged lassie it is!"

"Yes; I must have grown; I'm quite up to your shoulder now."

"So you are. And where's your sister—where's Jeanie?"

"She's gone for a drive with Lady Bentinck and Bernie, but I asked if I might stay, 'cos I felt sure you'd come."

"You have had a pleasant time here, you and Jeanie?"

"A lovely time, papa."

"And you're not sorry to be returning to humble little Rose Villa, and your simple life there; eh! my little girl?"

"No, indeed, papa; no, indeed." And Effie be-

stowed upon him an affectionate hug. "I'm sure of that. Jeanie an' me love our home, we really do."

"That's good hearing, dear. And now take me for a stroll, Effie, upon the sands till the others come back. We've a good hour before dinner, I should say."

"I'll go and fetch my hat, an' we'll take Chum," said Effie, flying off.

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The evening was so bright and fine that, after table-d'hôte dinner, Dr. Allan suggested a walk on the sands. It was the children's bedtime, but that fact was overlooked, because this was, as Jeanie urged, their last day at Shellbeach-by-the-Sea. Lady Bentinck was sitting on the balcony with some friends, and Miss Timms was helping Adela to pack, but the children were delighted to accompany Dr. Allan. They rushed off to tell Adela, with great empressment, that she needn't expect them yet as they were to sit up, "ever so late," and then they bore the little doctor off triumphantly, Effie and Bernard on either side of him, and Jeanie, who undertook to pioneer the party, leading the way with Chum.

It was, indeed, a beautiful evening, the air was soft and balmy, and a delicious sense of peaceful quiet prevailed, only the little waves broke upon the shore with a musical plash, while over the still waters echoed the distant voices of fishermen calling to each other as they lowered their nets.

"Just above yon sandy bar,
As the day grows fainter and dimmer,
Lonely and lovely a single star
Lights the air with a dusky glimmer.

* * * * *

Into the ocean, faint and fair,
Falls the trail of its golden splendor,
And the gleam of that golden star
Is ever refulgent, soft and tender."

"There's Jake's house," Effie showed her father, pointing to the quaint boat-house, from one window of which shone out the light of a lamp. "We went to tea with him yesterday, a good-bye tea party, an' he showed us a great many lovely shells that his brother, who's a sailor, brought him from foreign countries."

"And we had shrimps for tea; shrimps that Bernie helped Jake to catch," said Jeanie.

"So you've turned fisherman, eh! Bernard."

"Yes, Dr. Allan; sometimes I go out with Jake in his boat—on very smooth days. Mother won't let me go when the sea's rough, 'cos she can't forget that day of the storm, when the *Black-Eyed Susan* capsized, you know. But we wade to get shrimps, that's how we get them. Jake wears wading boots, an' mother told the shoemaker here to make me a little pair just like them. I look like a reg'lar fisherman when I have them on, you see, an' that's what I want. Don't you love Shellbeach, doctor? Jeanie an' Effie an' me do most awful. As for me, I'd like to live here; but no, I don't think I'd care to stop when they've gone." His bright face clouded over. "I'll miss them so," he said.

"And they will miss you too, Bernard. But your parting is not to be a long one, children. I have taken that house in London that I spoke to you of, Effie and Jeanie, and we are to go there in a couple of months' time. You and Bernard will often meet then, and I hope you will be much together."

"That will be 'lightful!" little Sir Bernard cried, clapping his hands. "I can't really say how glad I'll be. I used to feel very lonely in London often, an' I've been so happy at Bumbleton an' here. That's all 'cos of my Midsummer fairies. You know, Dr. Allan, I always think of Jeanie and Effie as my Midsummer fairies, 'cos of those flowers they threw over the garden wall of 'The Chestnuts,' you remember? I was rather 'spointed then when I found they were little girls 'stead of fairies, but afterwards I was glad; we had such nice games together, and you see p'raps fairies wouldn't care to play with a little boy. 'Sides, they don't like me much, the fairies don't, I never see them, they won't let me."

"Ah! the fairies are funny folk," Dr. Allan remarked, smiling. "Still, I'm sure you're mistaken in thinking they don't like you, my little boy, they love all good children."

"I'm not very good, I'm afraid," the child said, hanging his head. "Often I'm real naughty. But I'm trying to be gooder, an' Adela says my temper's much nicer than it used to be. I'm trying to be brave, too, so's I'll grow up a brave man like the picture ancestors at 'The Chestnuts' that you told me about."

"That's right, little one. If you try to be good and brave and ask God every day to help you, he will," Dr. Allan said, with his hand on the boy's pretty curly head.

"People used to look at me an' say, 'oh, he's a spoiled child,'" Bernard remarked. "An' I know they meant something nasty, 'cos they turned up their eyes an' shook their heads so. What's a spoiled child, Dr. Allan?"

"A child who has learned to become selfish and naughty. Loving and even indulgent treatment can never spoil a child if he is good at heart. Can you understand me, little people?"

"I think I can," little Sir Bernard said quickly. "You 'splain things so nice, Dr. Allan, they seem quite clear an' plain, like a book that's written in large print."

"Papa understands, that's it," Effie said, slipping her hand into her father's. "I think he's the most understanding person in all the whole world."

"Perhaps love teaches us grown people to understand, my dears," the doctor said thoughtfully, and then he added, in a dreamy tone and rather to himself than to the children, the words of a sympathetic and tender writer, whose books still live, though he himself has long since passed away. "I love these little people; and it is not a slight thing when they, who are fresh from God, love us."

* * * * *

"Good-bye, Midsummer fairies, good-bye," cried little Sir Bernard, standing on the platform of Shell-beach Railway Station, and waving his hand as the train that was to bear Jeanie and Effie away, glided slowly off.

"Good-bye," the twin sisters cried, their sunny faces, framed in big shady hats, appearing at the window. "Good-bye, Bernie, good-bye, Lady Bentina."

And then Jeanie lifted a struggling and barking Chum to the window, and then—then they were gone.

Little Sir Bernard's expressive face fell, and he heaved a very big sigh.

"I'll miss them *awful*," he said. "I'm glad we're going home this afternoon. I'd not care to stay at Shellbeach without Jeanie an' Effie. It's no fun to dig sand castles an' ride donkeys an' paddle in the sea all alone."

He was unusually silent as he walked back to the hotel with his mother and Miss Timms. A quick glance showed Lady Bentinck a very grave little face, but she attempted no consolation, feeling sure that he was better left alone until the first poignancy of the parting from his little playfellows was past. In this she was right. When they reached the hotel, Bernard said he thought he would go and have a chat with his fisherman, and so departed for the boat-house on the beach. A few moments before luncheon-time, he burst into his mother's private sitting room with as bright and rosy a face as she could wish to see, and an eager story of how Jake had had a wonderful night's fishing, and had caught more herrings than any other fisher in the bay.

Lady Bentinck listened attentively to his chatter, and made such sympathetic comments as she could muster. She was rather tired of hearing of fishermen and of fish and of the wondrous adventures of the *Black-Eyed Susan*, and she had long since thought wistfully of her London life and London friends. But she let her little son have no suspicion of this. His happiness was really her first concern, and the spoiled woman of fashion, whose beauty and whose wealth combined, won for her many flatterers and surrounded her life with the glamour of compliment, could be unselfish where her boy was concerned.

But when Bernard's narrative was finished, she

called him to her, and holding the little sunburned hands in hers, looked down rather wistfully at the fair, innocent face.

"Tell me, *mon cher*," she said softly, and perhaps a trifle reproachfully, "haven't you learned to care for those little playfellows—your Midsummer fairies, as you call them—better than for your mother who loves you?"

"No, no, *muvvy*," the little fellow answered earnestly. "Indeed not. I'm awful fond of Jeanie, an' Effie, an' of Dr. Allan too, but I shall always love you best."

He lifted his frank young eyes to her face, and in them shone such sincerity and affection, that she could not doubt his assurance.

"You'll see your little friends very soon again dear," she said, mastering her own jealous affection with an effort. "They are coming to live near us in London, and you may for a time—till you are old enough to have a tutor—share their lessons as well as their play. You're pleased to hear that? I thought you would be."

She was more than repaid by his eager thanks and caresses. And she felt that her boy was her own boy still, though no longer the spoiled child of bygone days, when, flinging his arms about his pretty young mother's neck, little Sir Bernard cried:

"I love you, *muvvy*, with all my heart I do, an' I couldn't love anyone else so much—not even those Midsummer Fairies!"



